

**DEVELOPING A POST- HETERONORMATIVE MISSION PRAXIS WITH THE  
BLACK PENTECOSTAL CHRISTIANS AND THE SEXUAL MINORITIES  
IN POLOKWANE: SOUTH AFRICA**

by

**THEMBA SHINGANGE**

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**SUPERVISOR: PROF RW NEL**

**CO- SUPERVISOR: DR E HANKELA**

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## DECLARATION

Name : Themba Shingange

Student number: 3547471-8

Degree : DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY (MISSIOLOGY)

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I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' shape with several vertical strokes intersecting it, all contained within a horizontal oval frame.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this thesis, I engaged in a possibility of developing a Post-Heteronormative mission praxis with the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane, South Africa. The thesis critically examines the current heteronormative oriented mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. It moves from the premise that the hegemonic position of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian's circle in Polokwane needs to be problematized. I show in this thesis that the Christian church which challenged the social ill such as poverty, racism and apartheid in South Africa should take as its moral crusade the challenging of heteronormativity in the contemporary South Africa.

Additionally, the re-reading of Biblical passage of scriptures when developing mission strategies is in a way recommended. Following the same recommendation, the sexual minorities in Polokwane are regarded as a type of the Good Samaritan. From a Samaritan who was marginalised because of his ethnicity however, Jesus placed him in a position of a good neighbour as presented in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane are called to come out of their confines. They are further challenged to see the good in the lives of the sexual minorities. By doing that, they can in process discover the presence of God already at work in the lives of the sexual minorities. Consequently, the post-heteronormative mission praxis was defined in the following manner: Mission as going out to see the good in the lives of the sexual minorities.

**Key Words:** Heteronormativity, Homosexuality, Black Pentecostal Christians, Sexual Minorities, Mission praxis, Mission and Missiology.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my late mother, Mrs Nwa-Jerry Fanisa Kate Shingange. You inspired hope and determination, always praying and guiding us towards the way to success. Your labour in our lives was never in vain

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ACDP	African Christian Democratic Party
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BPC	Church
CM	Community Member
DSTV	Digital Satellite Television
EAP	Employees Assistance Program
GCC	Gay Christian Community
HS	Heterosexual
HUMCC	Hope and Unity Metropolitan Christian Church
IAC	International AIDS Conference
ICC	International Convention Centre
KZN	KwaisiZulu-Natal
LGBTI	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex
LGBTIAQ	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex Asexual Queer
LP	Limpopo Province
MP	Mpumalanga Province
MSM	Men having Sex with Men
NBTC	Nicholas Bhengu Theological College
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIV	New International Version
OPW	Our Perfect Wedding
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation



SM	Sexual Minorities
STI	Sexual Transmitted Infection
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TV	Television
UN	United Nations
UNISA	University of South Africa
UP	University of Pretoria

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1.2. Orientation to the study**

Discourses regarding diverse sexualities have often raised heated debates. As a case in point, within the African context there has been a populist assertion that homosexuality was imported from Europe to Africa with the arrival of missionaries and colonial administrators. The earliest written record about African sexualities were those archived from the colonial explorers and missionaries who traversed the continent in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Tamale 2011:14). Again, Mudimbe puts it clearly that missionaries were also, paradoxically, the best symbol of the colonial enterprise. They devoted themselves sincerely to the ideals of colonialism embedded in the expansion of civilisation, the dissemination of Christianity, and the advance of progress (Mudimbe 1998:47). The same belief has led amongst other things to the notion of homosexuality to be labelled as un-African, un-Christian and abnormal (Msimbi 2011:69), therefore, deserving to be pushed to the peripheries.

#### **1.1.1 The homosexuality discourse**

Some scholars in different fields including Anthropology and Psychology, came up with theories regarding the origin of homosexuality. They did this in an attempt to justify its acceptability and unacceptability. In the process therefore, they came up with views that classified the phenomenon as pathology, deviant and sometimes as un-natural as reflected in the case of the Zambian Christians (Phiri 2016: 159). However, over the period of time these views gradually changed to the point where now, homosexuality is commonly seen within these sciences, as a sexual orientation just as heterosexuality is. Within a variety of scholarly disciplines there are now several aspects that are being considered when the concept of homosexuality is discussed. The biological, sociological, psychological and spiritual factors are amongst the factors often considered in the discourse. Others tackle the subject from the human right perspective while considering its historical and current trends

This discourse poses a new challenge to South African black Pentecostal Christians<sup>1</sup> and to Missiology respectively<sup>2</sup>. These can be traceable especially since the dawn of democracy in 1994. Amongst others, different sectors of the society started to respond to the thorny issues raised by heteronormativity in the society. Similar to these secular and religious structures, now the black Pentecostal Christians are called to clearly articulate its stance on the hegemonic position of heteronormativity.

This call is motivated amongst other things by the reality that religion and specifically Christianity but also, the scholarly reflection on it, through the discipline of Missiology, are not immune to the problems raised by societies, and in the case of this study, heteronormativity (Stuart 1997:178). The implication therefore, is that now the black Pentecostal Christian mission praxis has to face the challenge and respond in a manner that might perhaps transform the narrative. This may also provide a space for these Christians and faith communities to correct the legacies of the past colonial and the heteronormative-based approach to Christianity and mission praxis. Taking this route could also mean that the black Pentecostal Christians should seek to embrace the long rejected sexual minorities. Moreover, Christians have to start problematizing heteronormativity within their circles. The challenge though, is that in doing so the black Pentecostal Christians should also remain within the confines of the Christian faith and practice. Antonio (1997:302) articulated the challenge and call well when asserting that the question is no longer simply whether or not homosexuality existed in African cultures and amongst the black Pentecostal Christians, but also how, confronted by its existence, African cultures and Christianity are responding to it.

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<sup>1</sup> The term black is not used here to point out the ethnic differences between blacks and whites. In the context of this study, it refers to the black people's unique experiences of sexuality in relation to their understanding of the mission of God.

<sup>2</sup> From this point onward I will use the term black Pentecostal Christians to refer to the black Pentecostal Christians apart from cases where the term is necessary in order to emphasise a point

The call to respond to this question has therefore, unsettled the position of heteronormativity. The same position which has long been embraced by the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane is now called to question. The same is also true to my local congregation, the Christian Worship Centre (CWC) in Polokwane. This congregation is now confronted with the reality of heteronormativity and its impact on its members and community. The growing numbers of Christians who come out as openly gay or lesbians are now pushing the congregation to come up with a relevant mission praxis. Also the other sexual minority groups within the communities who are looking for a place of worship within the black Pentecostal Christian circles contribute to the need for an urgent response.

### **1.1.2 The non-heterosexuality controversy**

Similar to what was observed by Hunt (2009:1) when he pointed out that there is an increasing level of controversy in regard to non-heterosexuality, in particular homosexuality for the Christians, the congregation where I serve as a pastor, is facing similar controversies on the issue. Precisely, the controversy is fundamentally on the manner in which the black Pentecostal Christians like this, has to respond to the hegemonic<sup>3</sup> position of heteronormativity prevalent in both their circles and society. The analogy used by Nugget and Gramick (1989:29-42) in reference to the subject of homosexuality is now inarguably in my context true to the subject of heteronormativity.

Similar to the subject of homosexuality that Nugget and Gramick viewed as akin to a fishhook caught in the gullet of the church, that it could neither entirely swallow nor spit out, the discourse about heteronormativity has posed the same dilemma. Black Pentecostal Christians cannot avoid the deafening voices calling for the transformation of heteronormative structures, which in many cases includes Christianity. Amongst these voices, Emeritus-Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Tutu 1997: ix) stated that if the black Pentecostal Christians after the victory over apartheid, are looking for a worthy moral crusade then it has to focus on the fight against homophobia, heterosexist and

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<sup>3</sup> The term hegemonic is used here in a similar understanding presented by do Mar Castro Varela, Dhawan & Engel (2011: 3) when asserting that it refers to the dominance of one group or state over another

heteronormativity<sup>4</sup>. However, responding to this call is a very complex task for the black Pentecostal Christians. By embracing the non-normative sexualities and gender identities the black Pentecostal Christians might also be accused by others as denying the faith or be seen as being heretic<sup>5</sup>. At the same time, avoiding the challenges raised by heteronormativity in the lives of the sexual minorities raises a question about the reality of the love of God for all humanity.

## **1.2 The statement of the problem**

My initial discovery of the challenges raised by the position awarded to heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian circles in Polokwane was not planned. However, the discovery came through similar to what Marshall and Rossman (1989:21) referred to as a discovery of an interesting, curious, anomalous phenomena which researchers observe, discover, or stumble across. It all started when I first heard stories about the realities faced by the sexual minorities. These stories were told by people within my local black Pentecostal Christian circles and the community members in Polokwane. In an endeavour to gain more in-depth and scholarly insight, I then proceeded consciously to make preliminary observations on the phenomenon. In the process then, I discovered that the position of heteronormativity as a cause of many social ills, was however unquestioned and often overlooked in my faith community. Attention has commonly been given to issues of racism, poverty, sexism, colonisation etc, without scrutinising the impact of heteronormativity.

Furthermore, I also observed that the black Pentecostal Christians mission praxis and consequently, Missiology were also accused of helping heteronormativity to thrive. Amongst other scholars, Chitando & van Klinken have pointed out that colonialism and missionary Christianity contributed to the problem (Chitando & van Klinken 2016:3). This was evidenced when the black Pentecostal Christians and society presented a particular form of sexual and gender politics. Amongst other things presented by

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<sup>4</sup> The addition of the term heteronormativity is in italics here to show that it was added by I and it does not appear in the original text.

<sup>5</sup> The notion of being heretic has been used here to refer to false doctrine.

missionaries was the introduction of norms that were alien to precolonial African societies. Such politics included a strict regime of heterosexuality. Chitando & van Klinken further asserted that it was Pentecostalism in particular that has inspired the so-called enchantment of the homosexuality debate in Africa (:3). Because of these daunting accusations, there is undoubtedly an urgent need for the contemporary mission practitioners, especially from a Pentecostal background, to develop a different, post-heteronormative narrative. The hope is that such narrative will change the societal perceptions about the black Pentecostal Christians and the missionary enterprise respectively.

My observations further confirmed the urgency of addressing the phenomenon. Amongst other realities that formed part of my initial observations was that heteronormativity did not exclusively affect the sexual minorities. The reality was that their families, the community and members of the black Pentecostal Christians were grappling with its impact. Therefore, since in the past, Christians in South Africa collectively led moral crusades that challenged social ills, they must now act with regard to heteronormativity in the same manner as they did in the past. In the same spirit, the black Pentecostal Christians should now lead the processes of challenging the position of heteronormativity. By doing that, Christians can set a precedence for the entire society. I therefore, locate the contemporary mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians to be embedded in the challenge against heteronormativity.

As a result, mission practitioners and scholars in Missiology are to equally scrutinize the impact of heteronormativity in their faith communities and society at large. Furthermore, on the basis of sound scholarship, they are to point the axis towards the right direction of transformation. Missiology is now therefore, faced with the task of presenting missiological responses to the phenomenon. Looking from the past and present controversies about the subject of sexuality and worse, difficult conflicts over homosexuality within my black Pentecostal Christians background, I struggled to comprehend how to approach the dilemma and chart a way forward that can help my congregation and other Christians to respond to the missional call.

### **1.3 The research question**

Out of this struggle, I therefore, ask the question in this study, how should the non-heteronormative mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane look like?

#### **1.3.1 Sub-questions**

In order to adequately unpack the research question delineated above, I developed some sub-questions. Even though the study focuses on the geographical area of Polokwane, its finding can be applicable to other South African contexts that is made clear in the manner in which I framed the sub-questions in this section. Conversely, these sub-questions shed more light on the phenomenon and further locate the challenge to Missiology in general. The sub-questions were made clearer here by presenting them in the same sequential order following the pattern of each chapter. They were also formulated in the sequence of the chapters of this study following the dimensions of the praxis matrix. This concept will be presented in details as the research design in Section 1.7 of this study. In the following paragraph, I turned to the presentation of these sub-questions.

The first sub-question regards how the dimension of agency could shed some light on the realities engendered by heteronormativity in Polokwane? The second, seeks to find out what are the underlying issues influencing the acceptance of the hegemonic position of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian circles? Moving further, the third sub-question concerns how the Christian faith, practice and the interpretation of the Bible can contribute in the transformation of the current narrative about the black Pentecostal Christians and its mission praxis? Finally, the fourth sub-question concerns the practical strategies that could be used to redefine the mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane.



### **1.5 The relevance of the study**

The current discourse about non-normative sexualities and gender identities have presented an urgent need for research about the phenomenon within the field of theological and Missiology respectively. The research in the process therefore, presents a different understanding of God's mission which can also be relevant to the sexual minorities. The black Pentecostal Christians in general and the black Pentecostal Christians in particular can benefit from the findings of this study. They can use some of the findings to transform their communities. Additionally, the urgency of the call to conduct a missiological research on the subject was presented by the new developments in the country. The inception of the democratic African National Congress (ANC) government and also some trending issues in the media that exposed the state of heteronormativity brought a need for a systematic study which can address heteronormativity from a missiological perspective. The current study can therefore, contribute to scholars in various other disciplines, looking for ways of changing the current status quo.

Amongst other things that should be considered when attempting to change the current narrative will be some historical factors. The former South African apartheid government endorsed homophobia by marginalising and implementing discriminating laws against the sexual minorities (Althaus- Reid et al 2008:39-47). These laws enshrined a deep-seated homophobia and also pushed the sexual minorities to the peripheries. Amongst other things, the gruesome treatment of the sexual minorities was perpetuated by advancing the notorious "Immorality Act" of 1927<sup>6</sup> and the "Sodomy law" of 1976<sup>7</sup>. However, in the present democratic era things have taken a different turn although the legacies of the past are still entrenched in the structures of

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<sup>6</sup> This law was one of the prohibitions made by the apartheid government to prevent illicit carnal sexual intercourse between what was called at the time, "Europeans" and so-called, "Natives".

<sup>7</sup> This law defined certain sexual practices as crime. The law was aimed at targeting the homosexual people and was understood to refer to any sexual act that was deemed un-natural

the society. In the new era, everyone has the right to have their dignity respected and also to be protected against discrimination (:39-48).

The first black president, Nelson Mandela, met with gay activists and thereafter publicly endorsed their causes. He was then followed by the Nobel Prize-winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu who also publicly made his stance about his support for the sexual minorities (GALZ 2008:5). The change was further bolted by the inclusion of the principles of freedom in the constitution that prohibits discrimination of people based on their sexual orientation, preference or practice. This outstanding development was formally enacted in the new constitution in 1996 (Posel 2011:131). It was then put in place on the 04<sup>th</sup> of February 1997 (Schafer & Range, 2014:11). Consequently, that has led to the passing of the Same-Sex Civil Union Bill in 2006 by the South African parliament (:12)

These developments challenged the black Pentecostal Christians to navigate its way between its moral and constitutional allegiance. Although this study is not fundamentally about the same-sex unions, the passing of the bill has an implication to the subject under discussion. These developments amongst other things exposed the unchallenged position of heteronormativity existing within the different South African contexts including religious and black Pentecostal Christians circles. Amongst some exposed was the reactions by some prominent black Pentecostal Christians leaders who defended the hegemonic position of heteronormativity. Amongst those who explicitly rejected the inception of the bill was the leader of the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) Reverend Kenneth Meshoe. He lamented the passing of the bill and showed his displeasure by saying that

It was the saddest day of the twelve years of our democratic parliament.....Adultery, sexual immorality and homosexuality are grave sins in God's sight since they are a transgression of His law. And are defiling a marriage relationship between a man and a woman (Quintal 2006)

He further warned that South Africa was 'provoking God's anger' by passing the bill. The same notion was also espoused by the archbishop of Durban Wilfred Napier, who also explicitly said that:

Same-sex marriage is doomed to have a morally deleterious effect on the institution of the family and would mean the approval of deviant behaviour and would send the wrong message by making acceptable what is repugnant. (Altus-Reid, Quinn, Borgman and Reck 2008:42-43)

Such utterances made by prominent black Pentecostal Christians leaders projected a generalised view of heteronormativity existing within some black Christian black Pentecostal Christians leaders consequently, their views needs to be systematically scrutinised. The process may reveal other issues often overlooked when Christians make comments about homosexuality and other non-normative sexualities' issues. Moreover, there were also other remarkable incidences which also exposed the position of heteronormativity in the South African society. These developments also calls for an academic engagement.

For the immediate context of the study, the incidents include the reactions of the community members in Polokwane to the first public gay white wedding. The event took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2015. I witnessed the part of the wedding where the couple made a turn at the Polokwane municipality park<sup>8</sup> for some photo shoots. The wedding was subsequently broadcasted on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 2015 on the digital satellite television vision (DSTV) program known as Our Perfect Wedding commonly referred to as (OPW). The mother of one partner stated during the program that she was proud that her son was gay and that she considered him to be a gift from God ([www.mambaonline.com](http://www.mambaonline.com) accessed 2017.03.17, [www.sowetanlive.co.za](http://www.sowetanlive.co.za) accessed 2015.11.17). In my mind, by making the statement, the mother presented an understanding that God was on her side. However, the community members presented mixed reactions to the incident. Some embraced the couple and

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<sup>8</sup> The park is situated in the Polokwane city centre, couples often use it for photo shoots during their wedding celebrations.

commended them for their move. However, others displayed their disapproval by claiming that the wedding was against the African culture and Christianity.

There was yet another incidence which was also remarkable in pointing to the position of heteronormative in my community. The traditional wedding engagement of a famous Olympics athlete Caster Semenya getting married to Violet Raseboya in December 2015. Their engagement was subsequently followed by an extravagant white wedding in January 2017. (<https://www.tuko.co.ke> accessed 2017.01.04, [www.dailymail.co.uk>article-3916140](http://www.dailymail.co.uk>article-3916140) accessed 2017.01.08). The two women received support from their families and other community members from their villages. However, similar to the first gay wedding theirs also made the community and black Pentecostal Christians to express their views about homosexuality. Most people talked about how they felt about the wedding. Others however, expressed their views about the sexual minorities in general. Amongst those who expressed their views, some felt that in the democratic country like South Africa, there was nothing wrong in same-sex marriages. Again, others on the contrary, displayed their disapproval of the wedding.

The final example also pointed to the relevance of this study although it did not happen in Polokwane. It also had an influence on the merit that it happened within a South African context. Similar stories are common within the black Pentecostal Christians in my area. The story is that of a famous television celebrity who walked out of a black Pentecostal charismatic black Pentecostal Christians during a sermon. The incidence happened after a visiting pastor explicitly condemned homosexuality in his sermon. The incidence thereafter, sparked several debates on the media and amongst Christian circles. In the deliberation about the incidence on the DSTV news channel known as the eNCA<sup>9</sup>, Gutto (2017) argued that now the black Pentecostal Christians is faced with the dilemma of balancing their constitutional mandate and their Biblical imperatives. He further alluded that Christians will now have to show the entire society directions on the subject.

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<sup>9</sup> eNCA also referred to as E News Channel is a 24 hours television news broadcaster focusing on South Africa and African stories ([www.enca.com](http://www.enca.com))

The above mentioned developments therefore, makes this study relevant, not only to the community in Polokwane but also to others elsewhere. Although the subject of sexuality and homosexuality were previously often circumvented within the discourses of the black Pentecostal Christians, this study responds to the call by bringing the subject to the open. The possibility therefore, will be to chart a contour for a new mission praxis. That will not only be a response to the challenge however, it will also be a new way of doing and understanding mission. Similar to GALZ (2008:6), I am not suggesting that this research is the answer to all the challenges brought by heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian black Pentecostal Christians and Missiology. Rather, I hope that it will open some new frontiers for Missiology and also contribute to the contemporary Pentecostal Christianity. I am also aware that there might be a number of limitations and gaps that the study might have failed to covered. The next section will thus, mention just a few of those limitations. By mentioning those challenges here, other scholars and researchers can further look at the highlighted omissions and therefore, pursue the study further.

### **1.5 Limitations of the study**

The study addressed the subject focusing on the geographical area of Polokwane. There might be other critical dynamics relevant to the subject which could not be covered within this geographical settings. Other areas can also present a different outcome on the same subject. Again, the challenge of heteronormativity does not exclusively affect the black Pentecostal Christians. Other Christians elsewhere might be facing a similar predicament. Their contribution to the study might present other critical elements which were not reflected upon in this study. Therefore, the study might have missed some pertinent contributions that could have been presented by these Christians.

Furthermore, by exclusively focusing on the LGBTI, MSM and WSW, the sample did not include the concerns of other sexual minorities. Although these noticeable limitations are equally important, the scope of this study could not permit to cover all

the rest of non-normative sexualities. Those selected here were chosen because of their commonality in Polokwane and also their easy accessibility to the researcher. Different elements that are missing in this study can still be addressed by future research endeavours, conference papers and other publications. In the next section I will turn to the literature review in order to detect other contributions already made on the subject.

## **1.6 Literature review**

The process of reviewing literature in this study required the collection, reading and analysing of different sources. I did this exercise in order to examine the contributions made by other scholars and experts on the subject in question. As a result then, I gained an informed and in-depth knowledge which helped me in correctly aligning this study within the discipline of Missiology. Moreover, I also regard literature review as an important academic exercise that can bring the different angles of the subject to the open. By engaging in this process researchers are also able to discover some possible gaps which might be existing the exiting body of knowledge (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992:17). Consequently, by observing these gaps, the current study can be in a position of contributing extensively to the subject under discussion. I have then, presented the literature review in this section according to sub-topics that I deemed relevant in addressing the subject.

### **1.6.2 Heteronormativity within the South African black Pentecostal Christians**

The heteronormativity discourse was essentially muted within the South African Christian agendas. This was reflected when the religious voices in South Africa in favour of the Civil Union Act of 2006 were silenced (West 2016:185). The act bluntly accepted the equality of the sexual minorities with the rest of the people in the society. However, others within the black Pentecostal Christians circles did not agree with the move. In other cases though, the reality was that when the subject was addressed, the focus was often on challenging the notion of homosexuality rather than solely looking at heteronormativity as a problem. I thus, identified a need within Missiology and Christianity in general for a paradigm shift from this understanding. The move

could see amongst others Christians gradually noticing the problematic nature of heteronormativity and the need to challenge it. In the process thereof, realise the desired long anticipated transformation.

In his approach to heteronormativity within the South African context Stuart (1997) exposed some prevalent negative perceptions regarding homosexuality. However, he also traced some Christian black Pentecostal Christians which welcomed the sexual minorities as part of the family of God. This therefore, make it clear that even though some Christians are still embracing the notion of anti-homosexuality, there are however, others who openly reject heteronormativity. Nevertheless, that does not rule out the prevalence of the phenomenon within other black Pentecostal Christians and the entire South African society. This reality is also reflected by the perpetuation of compulsory heterosexuality without regarding its repercussions. Tamale saw this phenomenon as encompassing the socio-cultural system that assumes the existence of only two sexes. Its roots presents an understanding that see human sexual relations between a man and a woman as the only natural, normal and exclusively acceptable practice. Consequently, the rest of other sexual orientations, preferences, practices and gender identities that are outside the scope of heterosexuality are then rendered pathological, deviant and abnormal (Tamale 2011:640).

In supporting this understanding of heteronormativity, Soderblom (1997:157) and Hunt (2009:49-63) went further and asserted that this phenomenon has been awarded a sacred position that needs to be challenged. Within the South African context and in particular the Polokwane the assertions made by these scholars are proven to be the reality. The context of Polokwane presents characteristics with hegemonic heteronormativity tendencies. On the other side the same tendency marginalises other non-normative sexualities. The same findings are in line with those made by Stuart (1997) who also claimed that the reality of the situation is evidenced by the exclusion of the sexual minorities from the social and economic privileges. In the process however, their rightful participation in the activities of the society are often denied.

The exclusion of the sexual minorities goes further to manifest within the black Pentecostal Christians and its mission enterprise. According to Stuart (2007:78-100) there are tendencies amongst some South African black Pentecostal Christians members of portraying the black Pentecostal Christians as only belonging to the heterosexual people. The sexual minorities are therefore, depicted and treated as strangers in the house of God. Because of this reality becoming common and acceptable in the black Pentecostal Christians, the mission of God on earth is therefore, distorted from its true meaning. In agreement with Stuart, Blackwell (2014), argued that there are those who have gone further to denounce homosexuality in Christian terms.

Those who did so in most cases often failed to accept the sexual minorities as fellow members of the black Pentecostal Christians. As a result, they therefore, resorted to being hostile towards them. Accordingly, the sexual minorities are robbed of their freedom to worship and serve God wherever they preferred. It was the hostility from some Christian black Pentecostal Christians therefore, that motivated the development of what has been termed the gay friendly black Pentecostal Christians<sup>10</sup>. In pursuit of liberty of serving God without being subjected to discrimination and judgement, these black Pentecostal Christians adopted a stance of embracing all people irrespective of their sexual orientations or gender identities. Although these black Pentecostal Christians are not clearly detectible in the Limpopo province, in Gauteng they have made some considerable strides. That is manifested amongst other thing by the number of the Gay friendly black Pentecostal Christians which include the Reforming black Pentecostal Christians, Hope and Unity Metropolitan Black Pentecostal Christians (HUMCC), the Gay Christian Community Black Pentecostal Christians (GCC) and the Deo Gloria Family Black Pentecostal Christians (Stuart 1997:78-79).

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<sup>10</sup> Gay friendly black Pentecostal Christians is the term commonly used in South Africa to refer to black Pentecostal Christians which are welcoming to the LGBTI, affirms their sexuality and gender identities and also award them the freedom to worship and serve as members of the black Pentecostal Christians



Still on the manifestation of heteronormativity within the South African black Pentecostal Christians De Gruchy and Germound (1997) also lamented how most Christians were perpetrators of heteronormative. The two scholars argued that the South African Christians are positioning themselves in a place where they aid heteronormativity to thrive in the society. They do so by compelling homosexuals to deny their real selves and also to fail to welcome them as members of the black Pentecostal Christians. Therefore, the black Pentecostal Christians was considered to have joined the world in being blasphemous. This is evidenced by the discriminatory attitudes of Christians which has made homosexuals to begin to doubt their relationship with God (:2). What was observed by these scholars therefore, places the challenge within the mission circles. It should however, be born in mind that although this study focused in the South African context of Polokwane, similar challenges of heteronormativity are also prevalent elsewhere. Therefore, through the transformed view of Missiology, other Christian black Pentecostal Christians can find a way to reach out to the sexual minorities.

Lindner et al (2010:4-48) have also recognised that there were a number of Christians who still embraced a heteronormative culture in Brazil. However, these scholars recognised that even in the midst of such hostility there were still those sexual minorities who continued to embrace simultaneously both Christianity and their homosexual orientations (:37). Because of the continuing growth of the heteronormativity trend and its impact within the mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians, it is critical to embrace the discourse about the phenomenon with the hope of transformation. Such discourses can continue and also unearth new realities. It can further strengthens the prospects of transformation within the black Pentecostal Christians and society.

### 1.6.2 The sexual minorities and heteronormativity

Those who find themselves directly affected by heteronormativity are the sexual minority groups which include although not limited to Lesbians<sup>11</sup>, Gays<sup>12</sup>, Bisexuals<sup>13</sup>, Transgendered<sup>14</sup>, and Intersexes<sup>15</sup>(LGBTI). There is also a new phenomenon also common in Polokwane of those identifying as Men who have sex with Men (MSM<sup>16</sup>) and Women who have sex with women (WSW<sup>17</sup>). Without deliberating much on these new terms, it is however, worth mentioning that the term MSM has recently gained its currency within the black communities in South Africa. The development brought by this phenomenon has also brought some new dynamics in the discourse about homosexuality and heteronormativity respectively. The term was however, well deliberated upon by Brown, Duby, Scheibe and Sanders (2001:1-130); Lane et al. (2009: 1-9), Cloete et al. (2008:1-7), Simbayi et al. (2014:1-85) and Niehaus (2009:106-107).

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<sup>11</sup> Lesbians is term used to refer to women who have romantic, sexual and/ or intimate feelings for other women.

<sup>12</sup> Anova (2015:72) define the term gay as colloquial term used predominantly in Euro- and Western centric contexts to describe homosexual men who identify with a shared set value.

<sup>13</sup> Bisexuals are individuals who are sexually attracted to both men and women and are capable of entering into enduring intimate relationships with either men or women even with both (Anova 2015:71)

<sup>14</sup> Desmond Tutu Foundation (2011: xxxiii) refers to them as persons who have a gender identity that is different from their sex at birth.

<sup>15</sup>Previously referred to as 'hermaphrodites', this refers to individuals who are born with a combination of both male and female reproductive organs, chromosomes, and / or hormones that either fully or partially developed (Desmond Tutu Foundation 2011:xxix)

<sup>16</sup> The term MSM does not refer to sexual identity, but identifies a group of men who practice a particular behaviour , irrespective of whether they identify as heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual ( Anova 2015:7)

<sup>17</sup> WSW is preferable when referring to women who have sex with other women unless the individual self-identify as lesbians (Desmond Tutu Foundation 2011:xxx)

Similar to the MSM, there is also a concept of women who preferred to have sex with other women (WSW<sup>18</sup>) but not necessarily identify themselves as lesbians. They too also suffer the consequences of heteronormativity in the society. People still find it difficult to comprehend this reality. There is still yet another group that also find themselves facing similar challenges as the rest of the other sexual minorities in the society. This group commonly identify themselves as none-gender conforming persons<sup>19</sup> (Anova 2015:7, Brown, Durby, Scheibe & Sanders 2011:xxx, World health organisation 2011:16, Epprecht 2008:35, Msibi 2011:69). The group moves away from the tendencies of confining one's sexual practices, preferences and gender identities.

However, although there were some considerable amounts of differences between the different sexual minorities groups, some scholars noted that there was also a common tendency amongst communities to view the sexual minorities as a homogeneous group. The truth though, was that even when the sexual minorities share some similarities they were nevertheless, multidimensional groups (Matshidze (2017:317). Furthermore, some scholars additionally pointed out that there was a trend within the South African communities of inclusively referring to all the sexual minorities using terms such as *Stabane* (Rudwick (2011:96)

The term *Stabane* is sometimes regarded to be a derogatory expression<sup>20</sup>. Again, in other contexts the rejection of the sexual minorities is similarly manifested by people using terms such as “faggot” or *Moffie* (in Afrikaans). These terms carry the similar

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<sup>18</sup> WSW is preferable when referring to women who have sex with other women unless the individual self-identify as lesbians (Desmond Tutu Foundation 2011:xxx)

<sup>19</sup> None gender conforming are people who are by societies norms not recognised as male or female (Anova sexual health for transgendered and gender non-conforming people)

<sup>20</sup> The derogatory part of the term includes amongst other things when it is used for stigmatisations, name calling, swearing and labelling of sexual minorities.

derogatory connotations as *Stabane* despite being used in different contexts (Reddy 2000:168, Ratele 2011:411). On the other hand, Donovan (1995:73) and Quinn (2008:10) argued for the use of the plural form of homosexuality. As a result, the term homosexualities is preferred. Such argument is based on the premise that apart from the usage of the term in reference to both gays and lesbians, there are still other diverse forms of *same-sex practices*<sup>21</sup> which fall under the category of homosexuality. Whilst the contribution made by these scholars in establishing the different forms of sexual minorities groups is commendable, their failure to bluntly problematize heteronormativity left a gap which the current study has considered.

### **1.6.3The homosexuality debate in South African**

The subject of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christians and society cannot be disentangled from the homosexuality debate. Although this study is fundamentally not about homosexuality, the subject however, forms the core part of the heteronormative discourse. These concepts are closely interlinked in a way that the former is a direct reaction to the later. Homosexuality has been for ages at the centre of contentions and divisions amongst Christians from different denominations and traditions. The link between homosexuality and heteronormativity amongst other Christian discourses has been reflected by the commonly used term that has been simplistically labelled as the *homosexualitatis problema*<sup>22</sup> (the homosexuality problem) (Reid et al 2008:23, Masango 2002:956-972, Thatcher 1990:127-140, Ratele, 2011:412). The tendency of presenting homosexuality as a problem automatically positions the whole idea to be intrinsically heteronormative.

Another aspect of the debate regards the issue of whether the sexual minorities who are in visible stable relationships should be accepted in the ordained ministry? (Vasey1995:7-10). The reason this issue is often raised is caused amongst others by

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<sup>21</sup> Same-sex practices here refers to the sexual activities which often takes place between people of the same-sex

<sup>22</sup> This was ecclesiastical opinion issued by the Congregation of the faith, it tried to retain the association of innate disposition and behaviour, in order to maintain the condemnation of homosexuality whilst regarding the homosexual person as not a sinner (Reid et al 2008:25)

the debate within the black Pentecostal Christians. There are these in black Pentecostal Christians who hold the view that monogamous same-sex relationships are acceptable. However, those who are within these marriages are often restricted from serving as ordained ministers. Such a view however, does not only reflect the elements of heteronormativity, it further presents an ideology of a discriminating God. According to this view, God only calls into the ministry those who are heterosexually orientated. This kind of assertion fails to present the true mission of God. The true mission is manifested by when God is presented as loving every human being irrespective of their sexual orientations or gender identity. The debate has also been presented in some studies using the moral and Biblical terms.

#### **1.6.4 Moral and Biblical perspectives on homosexuality**

The debate over homosexuality is a remarkable opportunity that raises acute interpretations of the Bible. However, in the interpretation of the Biblical texts that addresses homosexuality, Christians must come to terms with the painful truth that they will always have to agree to disagree (Wink 1999: 33-49). Even within the Pentecostal Christian circles the subject of Biblical interpretation in regard to homosexuality is still a painful debatable issue. The common scriptural references often used by Christians to condemn homosexuality has been termed *the seven anti-gay texts*<sup>23</sup>.

These texts include the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah – Genesis 18:26-19:29, the two verses that prohibits anal intercourse (Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13), the prohibition of cult prostitution including male prostitution (Deuteronomy 23:17, 18, the verse perceived to be presenting the condemned origin of homosexuality (Romans 1:18-32. The godly and charitable life (1Corinthians6:9-10), the condemnation of homosexuality (1 Timothy 1:8-11) and the reference to Sodom and Gomora in Jude 7 (Vasey1995:124-137). Some of these verses are also commonly used by Christians in Polokwane in defence of heteronormativity. The challenge however, with using

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<sup>23</sup> These verses are often used by Christians who are anti-gay to prove from the Biblical scriptures that God is supposedly against homosexuality.

Biblical scripture as a basis for anti-homosexuality is the vast interpretations often attached to these verses. The interpretation are amongst other things influenced by conflicting culturally and socially constructed ideologies. The problem with such constructions however, is that cultures are fluid, they change from time to time and also deferrers according to contexts.

On the other hand, Germond (1997:188-227), Childs (2003:1-121) and Nicolson (2008:1-74) presented homosexuality as a problem moving from another angle. They contested the unacceptability of homosexuality within the Christian circle using the moral point of view. This view yet, presents another challenge in the face of ill-treatment faced by the sexual minorities. There are common stories of sexual minorities being murdered as a result of homophobic impulses. There are also women who are raped and murdered in a quest for “correcting” their non-normative sexualities. Facing such realities therefore, raises a question of what is important between observing the rigid moral prescripts and saving human life from homophobes.

Others, however, such as Wink (1999), went further and used the Bible to prove the perceived wrongness of homosexuality. Wink based his argument on the notion that the correct interpretation of the Bible should be seen as a means of informing human conduct (:33). Although his argument seemed justifiable at a face value, when scrutinized intensely it proved to entrench heteronormativity using Biblical terms. On the other hand, it also failed to define what the correct Biblical interpretation entail. There are however, many different modes of Biblical interpretations which all claim to be correct. However, since those who implore Biblical interpretation in addressing sexual orientation issues often reach different conclusions, the Bible therefore cannot be solely used to justify the place of heteronormativity in the society. I will nevertheless, not overemphasise this issue at this juncture, others point. Hers such as Germond (1997:187-232) and Malloy (1981:185-212) have adequately addressed it elsewhere. I will now turn to some theological lenses which have a bearing on the subject of this study.

### **1.6.5. Some Theological lenses on the position of heteronormativity**

The subject of heteronormativity can also be viewed from a theological angle. Some theological works could be traced that can shed some light on the subject. Different theological backgrounds have in one way or the other contributed and also brought different insights on the phenomenon in question. They also show how different theological traditions addressed or even failed to address the subject of heteronormativity. It is therefore, critical to closely look at some of these theological lenses.

#### **1.6.5.1 Critical theology**

Dreyer (2008:739-765) appealed to critical theology as a tool for addressing issues such as sexual orientations in relation to Christian faith. Consequently, he argued that Critical theology was relevant in addressing these issues because of its ability to open up to other sources of knowledge. Amongst these sources, Dreyer saw arts and sciences as relevant platforms that Critical theology often appeal to when addressing sex, sexuality and sexual orientation issues (:1245). This understanding thus, locates Critical theology at a better position of addressing the challenges of heteronormativity in the society. That can mean that theology and Missiology can also learn and used these sources to argue for an inclusive theology which embraces every person.

Dreyer further stressed that in order to challenge heteronormativity within the Christian circles, Christians can approach and learn from some relevant field which has already conducted imperial researches on the subject. Amongst these fields of study, Anthropology, Biology, Psychological and other social sciences which presents different perspectives on the subject can also be helpful (:1246). Rather than solely judging the sexual minorities based on the black Pentecostal Christianity and general moral prescripts<sup>24</sup>, through appealing to Critical theology Christians can extract some

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<sup>24</sup> The term general moral scripts was used here to refer to what the community in Polokwane commonly regard as good or bad.

grounds for defending their challenge of heteronormativity. Moreover, he also realised that Christians often avoided discussing sexual orientation issues because they lacked relevant information. In order to address that gap, black Pentecostal Christians can appeal to critical theology and so, obtain a ground for the inclusive approach.

#### **1.6.5.2 Gay and Lesbian theologies**

Stuart (2003:1-114) presented the concept of Gay and Lesbian theologies. She further argued that it was necessary for this theology to be introduced. In the past, sexual minorities were often relegated to the margins. In her deliberations she based her argument against the backdrop of supporting the gay and lesbian studies. In that move, the Gay and Lesbian theologies have been an attempt for sexual minorities to claim their own voices. They do this by claiming subjectivity, moral agency and right to self-definition and determination. She further argued that this kind of theology also symbolised a rejection of heterosexual normative-ness and construction of homosexuality as pathology (:7). In her further description of the nature of Gay and Lesbian theologies, Stuart maintained that:

This type of theology locates the divine, not in the problematic modern self, but in the between-ness of person, and much more effectively than liberal theology, they expose the heterosexist and homophobia at the heart of dominant theological reflection and suggest strategies to deal with it (:7)

Gay and Lesbian theologies have been instrumental in the conceptualisation of the current study. However, there was still a need to apply the arguments enshrined in that particular theology not only to gays and lesbians but also to the entire sexual minority's groups. Since Gay and Lesbian theology exclusively focused on the gay and lesbian realities, it might be correct to say that they neglected the unique concerns of other sexual minorities who are equally facing the oppressive elements in the society. In view of the above, the current study borrowed some elements from Gay and Lesbian theologies however, when doing theological reflections I also included the realities of other sexual minorities who were not covered by these theologies.



On the other hand Long (1997: 266-293), presented the notion of an exclusive Gay theology that did not include the lesbians and other sexual minorities. In his view Gay theology was not meant to articulate what traditional theology has to say about homosexuality. On the contrary, it was developed to give a voice to what should be said ethically and religiously moving from a premise of gay experience (:266). Gay theology therefore, takes the realities of the gay people as a point of departure in the understanding of God. It further entrenches the gay experience as understood in the appreciation of the gay *ghetto's* sexual promiscuous celebration of male beauty. That particular celebration is seen as providing Gay theology with a distinctive voice and power (:280). Hence Gay theology focused on the realities of the people who see themselves as exclusively as gay. It also looks at how they understand their spirituality in relation to their sexuality.

For the reason that Gay theology exclusively addressed the concerns of the gay community, its exclusivist approach failed to sufficiently address heteronormativity as experienced by other sexual minorities who does not identify as gay. However, gay theology in the context of this study presented a breakthrough into gay realities. Rather than exclusively looking at a particular gay reality, the next theological approach used the term Queer theology to embrace the different experiences of the sexual minorities collectively.

#### **1.6.5.3 Queer theologies**

Queer theologies gained its roots from the queer theory. This concept comes from an appropriation of terms of derision and rejection. It originated from the complex result of theological reflections that consider what the different constructions of sexuality and gender have to say of the understanding of God, love and community (Althaus–Reid et al 2008:89-91). This type of theology is therefore, an extension of Liberation theology which concerns itself with love, justice and lived experiences. Moreover, it looks at theology through a queer eye that highlights the diversity of people who do not fit into the heteronormative categories. It should also be pointed out that it criticises gay and lesbian theologies as perpetuating the notion of a monolithic view of non-

normative sexualities (Hunt 2009: 154-156). Queer theology therefore, becomes relevant to this study because of its emphasis on the multiplicity of sexual practices and experiences.

The assumptions of Queer theology was also used by Loughlin (2007:200-211). She appealed to Queer theology in her discussion about the issues of Sexual differences within the black Pentecostal Christians mission spectrum (:203). She maintained that Queer theology introduced a way of understanding same-sex relationship as a possible manifestation of Christ holiness (204). Queer theology following similar thought as presented by Loughlin emphasises the importance of God's given mission where Christ is leading the individual not towards the reaffirmation of gender roles and gender differences but towards the way of life.

Queer theology again pointed to the challenge of sacralising heteronormativity and the reaffirmation of gender differences in many theologies. It has done commendable work of showing the other side in which the mission of God can be presented. However, by closing the heterosexuals outside the mission of God it also committed the similar error noticeable within other heteronormative theologies which pushed homosexuality outside their confines. I have therefore, used in this study some assumptions of Queer theology however, I avoided in my proposed mission the tendency of using an exclusivist approach. That was done by looking at mission as supposed to embrace every person regardless of their sexual orientations or gender identities. Humanity as created in the image of God became the defining factor of my arguments in this study. Although heteronormativity was wrong, I also see the homonormativity prevalent within the Queer theory as also equally unacceptable.

#### **1.6.5.4 Black Liberation theologies**

In his study Sneed (2008) argued that Black liberation theology has committed an error by being silent on issues regarding sexuality and sexual minorities' oppression within the black communities (:24). Although Black liberation theologies challenged

oppressive structures in the society, the problematizing heteronormativity was often avoided. Furthermore, in addressing social ills, Black Theologians focused on the black people's experiences yet, excluded the unique experiences of the black sexual minorities. On the other side, Sneed further commended Cone when he said that:

Any theology that does not spring from the experiences of humans can be deemed as alien and an abstract discourse that cannot defeat evil in the world (:32).

He also showed that Black liberation theology was a relevant platform that can address the plight of the black sexual minorities (:3). In doing so it should consider their unique experience visible in that they suffer first because they are black, and secondly because they are homosexually oriented. He subsequently lamented the silences of Black theologies on addressing heteronormativity in the black people's life by saying that:

As I advanced in my graduate studies, I always questioned where and when sexual orientation would enter into discussion of black life (:3)

Although, the current study is not precisely about Black theology, I do however, use its theory when doing the theological reflections on the findings of the study. I therefore, adopted Sneed's concern and considered it amongst other things when conducting this study. I similarly shared the same sentiments that sexual orientation also forms part of black people's realities. The current study therefore, moved from a similar premise. It emphasised the seriousness of addressing sexual orientation when challenging the oppression of the black community. Still, it also proposed that heteronormativity in the black Pentecostal Christians circles should be the focal point of the process of transformation. I further concur with Sneed that:

The black community needs this discourse to help it to understand the role of Black sexuality in maintaining the White hegemonic, racist, and sexist, classist, and heterosexist structures. A sexual discourse of resistance is needed also to help Black men and women recognise how the White cultural exploitation of Black sexuality has corrupted Black people's concept of themselves, one another, and their God (:68)

The oppression of black sexual minorities was again presented as a maintenance of White hegemonic heterosexist culture. This understanding was important in the context of this study as it seek to challenge the common perceptions which presents homosexuality amongst the black as an embarrassment. There are therefore, different roots of heteronormativity which still needed to be uprooted in both the black Pentecostal Christians and society. The contribution of Pentecostal Christianity to heteronormativity also have to be scrutinized.

#### **1.6.5.5 The contribution of Pentecostalism in the discourse**

African Pentecostalism has its roots from the Christian tradition that emerged in the day of Pentecost as narrated in the Biblical book of Acts (2:8) (Nel 2015:80). I have therefore, used the term Pentecostalism in this section with the reference to the movement which came into being after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the day of Pentecost. Christians from different countries gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Weeks. The celebration reminded them of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. There were also one hundred and twenty followers of Jesus Christ who were in the upper room when the Holy Spirit came upon them. The narrative in Acts show that as a result of the Holy Spirit they began to speak in new tongues. Not only did the Spirit led them to speak in new tongues however, it also sends them to go out and change the world (Countryman & Ritley 2001: 28). The idea of changing the world can also mean challenging oppressive structure through the gospel Jesus Christ.

Pentecostalism was formally organised and defined in terms of the Pentecostal Christians that originated at 312 Azusa Street in Los Angeles. The Pentecostal Christians called itself the Apostolic Faith Movement (Synan 1997:98).The term was also utilized when John G Lake and Thomas Hezmalhalch's missionary work led to the origin of the Pentecostal black Pentecostal Christians in South Africa Nel (2015:61). Christians who are adherents of this movement hold in high esteem the speaking with tongues, the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the salvation of sinners (Bosman :2006). However, although Pentecostal Christians are concerned about other social ills manifesting in the society, there is a lack of direct challenge to the position of heteronormativity. Chittando & van Klinken (2016: 6-10) correctly points

out that Pentecostalism originally is a holiness-orientated movement therefore, putting a strong emphasis on morality in general. Again, on issues related to sexuality and homosexuality in particular. Furthermore, homosexuality is rarely discussed because it is simply perceived as not acceptable within the Pentecostal Christian circles.

In his deliberations, Bosman further highlighted the need for developing a sexual theology which is distinct from a theology of sexuality (:46). Such a development could ensure that human sexual experiences become the point of departure in doing theology. This approach can help in transforming the black Pentecostal Christians fundamentalist approach when addressing sexual issues in particular non- normative sexualities and gender identities. Since, the black Pentecostal Christian often impose fixed standards of moral behaviour, sometimes it becomes difficult for the sexual minorities to feel welcomed within their space (:48).

In another study on Pentecostal mission and social concerns, Samuel and Sugden (1999:112- 117) reflected on mission as the commitment to respond to those who are hurting, hungry, lost and oppressed. Their study promoted the decision of the multinational consultation that met in Brussels, Belgium on the 27<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 1998. It was agreed in the same consultation that time had come for a holistic approach to the mission of God. The same mission was to be carried out by the Pentecostal black Pentecostal Christians in the whole universe (:113). According to my view, the holistic meant according to my view that amongst other things taking into cognisance all the approach to mission should include the aspect of sexual orientations.

Such mission should also stress the grace of God rather than being judgemental. That task can be done through asserting that the mission of God should be made visible through love, mercy, peace, justice and respect for all persons (:115). Furthermore, missions should be directed to all people considering that everyone is created in the image of God (:116). In that particular study, Samuel and Sugden further, demonstrated the importance of inclusivity when doing the mission of God. Therefore,

mission is portrayed as belonging to God and Christians only privileged to participate in it. The current study therefore, appealed to the similar argument. Nonetheless, it moved further and challenged the exclusion of the sexual minorities in the mission presented by the black Pentecostal Christians. It further addressed the impact of heteronormativity in the mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians something that Samuel and Sugden did not focus on.

Dempster (1999:45-75) on the other hand gave a Biblical basis for social concern that echoes the mission and ministry of the contemporary Pentecostal black Pentecostal Christians. The Pentecostal mission propelled by the *eschatological urgency*<sup>25</sup> is exposed to the world's political ills, economic challenges, social concerns and structural injustices. All these compel the Pentecostal Christians to come up with ways aimed at addressing social challenges (:46). Dempster argued that the other way of addressing these challenges will be to appeal to *lived faith*<sup>26</sup> rather than to Christian morality. By appealing to *lived faith*, Biblical and Christian morality are transformed from a perfectionist ideal into a kingdom principle. Again, the love of God everyone will be the motivating factor when reaching out to the communities. Yet again, it further stresses that those who belong to God's kingdom should also love every human being without partiality (:60). Dempster explained further regarding the need for the Pentecostal Christians to engage in social justice by saying that:

This kingdom love is manifested through engaging in social mission that calls for the compassionate treatment of aliens (63), challenging the exploitation of women (:65), encouraging the payment of poll taxes (:67), seeking for the justice of these oppressed by underdevelopment, unemployment and poverty (:68) and fighting for the dignity of children (:70).

Dempster saw the need for the Pentecostal mission to address specific social ills in the society. However, in his list of priorities the exploitation and the marginalisation of sexual minorities through heteronormative structures was not mentioned. The current

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<sup>25</sup> The term Eschatological urgency can be understood to refer to the belief on the immanent end of the world and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

<sup>26</sup> Lived faith denotes to the Christian experience throughout the ages

study therefore, complements Dempster's thoughts but also took the argument further. It points to the need for challenging the marginalisation of the sexual minorities in both black Pentecostal Christians and society. The challenge should not be limited to the secular sector, it should also be extended to the black Pentecostal Christians and Missiology.

Moving further, Banda (2008:131-181) reflected on the predominant understanding of homosexuality within a Pentecostal, Northmead Assembly of God black Pentecostal Christians in Zambia. He then presented an understanding of Pentecostal mission theology. He made it clear that Pentecostal Christians does not solely focus on winning souls, they also support the holistic approach to the gospel (:134). The Pentecostal mission in this case acknowledged the issues related to sexuality as deserving to be addressed. However, heteronormativity could still be traceable in the presentation. This was manifested in his words when he stated that:

The only reason why man and man come together in same-sex relations is that because of their sexual preference they claim are only attracted to men. It is a distortion, a serious distortion! The definition purely here is by sexual means, but God's order of marriage is not defined purely by sex (:144)

Although Banda's study presented the understanding of Pentecostal mission theology within a black Pentecostal congregation in Zambia, the findings from his study can be true amongst other black Pentecostal Christians settings elsewhere in Africa and South Africa in particular. Banda emphasised that same-sex relationships were a matter of preference. This kind of thinking can be regarded as representing the heteronormative attitude that is common within most black Pentecostal Christians. It is often taken for granted that the sexual minorities have decided on their sexual orientations. Therefore, they can also decide to discard homosexuality if they want to. Another common perception of homosexuality amongst these black Pentecostal Christians is the argument about complementarity of a man and a woman. Such complementarity is therefore, understood to be God's divine order (:145) compelling opposite sex unions.

Homosexuality in the general Pentecostal tradition is regarded as being outside God's divine order. This kind of thinking is misleading and erroneous. When not correctly clarified it might promote the oppression of the sexual minorities. The current study therefore, moved away from such oppressive elements and regarded everyone equal before the sight of God. It is thus, critical in responding to some of these assumptions about the complementarity of men and women. In this study I have also engaged the body of knowledge which addressed the topic from other angles. I have then moved further and tried to eliminate some of the identified gaps.

#### **1.6.6 Heteronormativity in South Africa**

Rudwick (2011) pointed out some of the important elements which people in the Kwa Zulu-Natal (KZN) province of South Africa used to negate homosexuality. They did so with the emphasis of seeing it as an African practice. Although her focus was in KZN (:94). The same argument goes further to see Africanism in terms of exclusive heterosexuality. In the process however, such a view do not recognise the homosexual practice as a legitimate African practice (:94). On the same debate however, Msibi (2011) found that the rejection of homosexuality as un- Africa was only the rejection of the visible, political and personified gay identity which troubled the pretence of heteronormativity. Africans were aware of the same-sex relationships however, the open representation of homosexuality challenged their ideal notion of manhood and masculinity. Gay men challenged the embraced muscular view of what an African real man was supposed to be. In essence, African men felt that gay men were dragging down their image.

Additionally, Niehaus (2009: 85-111) brought another perspective on the subject. He argued that the sexual minorities existed in Africa including South Africa even before the coming of the Europeans. He used his argument to dispel the myth that homosexuality was only introduced in Africa by Western civilisation. In his argument he further lambasted the heteronormative attitude of some African leaders. He therefore, pointed to heteronormativity as embraced by politicians such as Robert Mugabe, Sam Nujoma and Kenneth Mashoe. He then refuted their claims that the



origins of the same-sex erotic experience was to be confined to the European context (:106).

In presenting his view, Niehaus further brought to the fore what he called the reality of men to men sexual relationships in Africa. He maintained that the prevalence of this notion was evidenced by men who took younger men in the South African mines as their mine sexual partners. Others also practiced same-sex relationships in the context of imprisonment. For him, the fact that there was a denial of existence of the same-sex relationships in Africa prior to the coming of the Westerners was just a farfetched ideology. He also disputed the ideology that men to men sexual relationship were a result of the absence of women in certain contexts. In defending his position, Niehaus (2009) stated that:

The older men believed that having sex with a younger man was healthier as compared to transactional sex with sex workers (:94). Contrary to the belief that same-sex encounters were the results of contingent inversion occasioned by the absence of women in the male compound, many senior migrants preferred mine wives (:106).

The current study has drawn some important insight from these scholars who have argued on the prevalence of heteronormativity in both the South African society and Christian circles. There was still however, a compelling need to re-look at these issues raised by the scholars and in the process contextualise their arguments. In order to respond to the need for contextualisation, the current study looked closer at the topic however, from my own local context of Polokwane. Additionally, I also investigated the phenomenon within the field of Missiology which has often focused on other areas and other social ills in the society. The current study therefore, has disputing the assertion that homosexuality was un-African. It further looked at the local context then, contextualise the subject.

### **1.6.7 The impact of heteronormativity in the lives of non-heterosexual people**

Rejection does not exclusively affect the sexual minorities' physical and emotional well-beings. It does however, also make even their faith in God dwindle therefore, feeling as strangers and aliens in their black Pentecostal Christians. The words of Leanne McCall Tergert clearly present the frustrations of being rejected based on sexual orientations or gender identity:

Although the congregation had expressed great satisfaction with my work, the pastor fired me immediately upon learning of my sexual orientation. ....I know that the church is my home and I can't imagine being without it, but maybe all that gets wiped out and doesn't matter if I admit who I really am. Maybe God doesn't have a place for the real me (Tergert 1996: xiii)

The frustrations expressed by Tergert, cannot exclusively be confined to her context. Similar frustrations are common in other contexts and are also observable within my own local community. The stories told during this study show that it is important to consider the impact of heteronormativity in the stories told by those affected. Similar stories to that told by Tergert were also common in Polokwane. Those who told their stories included black Pentecostal Christians members who struggled with their non-normative sexualities in relation to their Christian faith. Christian parents who wanted to know how to relate with their children who were non- heterosexuals. Couples who struggled to come to terms with their spouses who were having extra marital affairs with people of the same-sex and it affected their Christian lives. Christians who wanted to know how to relate to same-sex Christian within the black Pentecostal Christian circles. All these demanded answers and wanted to know the position of our local black Pentecostal Christianity on the subject.

### **1.6.8 The position of heteronormativity questioned**

The position of heteronormativity in the society has been recently questioned from different angles. Scholars in different fields and other structures of the society started to be concerned about the unchallenged heteronormativity. Amongst those disgruntled by its effect were Cloete et al (2008), Lane et al (2009) and van Klinken (2011: 183-226). These Scholars openly critiqued the position of heteronormativity and also

questioned its place in the society. They showed that treating heterosexuality as the only normal sexual expression was an error that needed to be urgently corrected.

By challenging this norm these scholars proved from a scholarly position that the existence of heteronormativity was a problem in the society. Its repercussions were undesirable and were destroying the people made in the image of God. The current study therefore, was amongst other things influenced by the foundation already laid by these scholars. However, the study went further to demonstrate that it was not enough just to challenge heteronormativity; there was also a need to provide an alternative solution in the form of transformation.

In line with the move to challenge heteronormativity, Msibi (2011) and Van Klinken (2011) argued that heteronormativity was just a façade that served to entrench patriarchy prevalent within African societies. This point was brought to the surface as an important element that was often neglected by some scholars who problematized heteronormativity. It also showed that heteronormativity in the society manifested in different forms such as when men fostered their patriarchal positions. They did this by using heteronormativity to mask their intentions. In supporting this view, Van Klinken and Ben-Smit (2013) went further and stressed that:

Christian contexts are often rather ambiguous in terms of their complicity with patriarchal ideologies and structures. Moreover, they are sometimes generally defined in a heteronormative way and sometimes explicitly homophobic. These are precisely issues that need further investigation and critical interrogation in the study of men and masculinities in contemporary Christianity.

The urgency of the call is embedded in the reality that heteronormativity promoted discrimination. It stresses individual's acceptability within local communities and black Pentecostal Christians based on their sexual orientations and gender identities. This reality manifests again when the black Pentecostal Christians view heterosexuality as a standard requirement for every member of the black Pentecostal Christian congregation. In the process therefore, marginalise and ostracise non-normative sexualities and other gender identifies. To exacerbate the problem, society finds

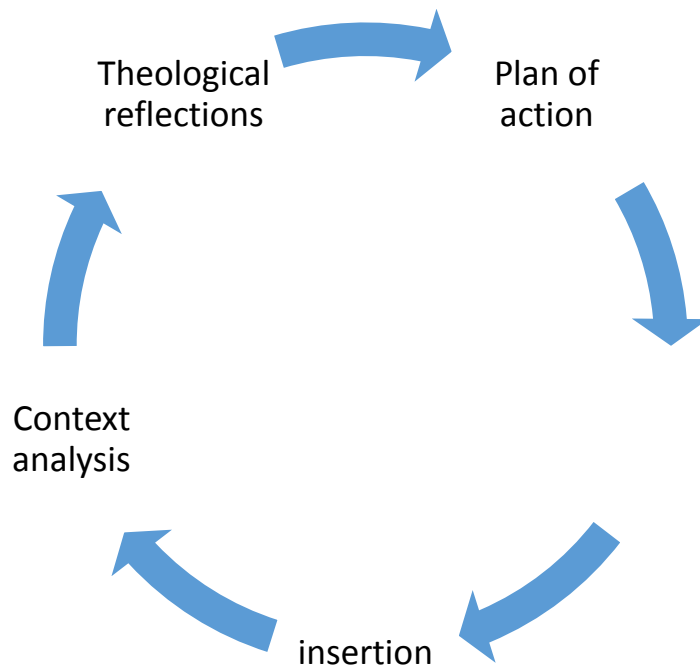
grounds for discrimination using the black Pentecostal Christian's position. Marginalising, and rejection of the sexual minorities therefore, becomes perceived as an acceptable norm. The discriminatory acts are then justified and perpetuated whilst ignoring the fact that people are not born the same as Burr (2009:1) correctly pointed out that:

It is not intentional, but we just keep forgetting that many people are not born right –handed, White, middle-class, heterosexual males.....while many groups still tend to view sexual minorities as shameful in the eyes of God, they can do so only by overlooking the fact that each day infants are born who cannot be clearly defined as male or female, because they have hormones or physicality of both sexes. (Burr 2009:1)

Forgetting the truth about the reality of a pluralistic society and the beauty of differences, people tend to perceive the world as homogeneous and therefore, anything different possess a threat. It is, as Antonio (1997:302) correctly asserted that ideologically, African culture is defined as one single thing shared by the entire continent. The truth is that the perceived total homogeneity does not exist. The similar sentiments were shared by Althaus, Reid, Quinn, Borgman and Reck who further elaborated that when people are reduced to a single identity the outcome thereof is the promulgation of a system of classifications according to different categories. At the end however, classifications prove to have power over people leading them to reduce, devalue and reject others they deem to be different (Althaus Reid et al 2008:10)

## **1.7 The research design**

I have adopted and modified the cycle of mission praxis commonly used within the discipline of Missiology. The same cycle is sometimes referred to as the pastoral circle. I therefore, used the cycle as the research design for this study. This cycle was initially used by Holland and Henriot (1983). It initially consisted of four dimensions of insertion, context analysis, theological reflections and plan of action. Since its inception the cycle was adapted several times by mission practitioners within the discipline of Missiology. Similar to these practitioners, I adopted the cycle in this study and also applied it within the perspectives of my background. Figure 1 below represents the pastoral circle as it was originally developed.



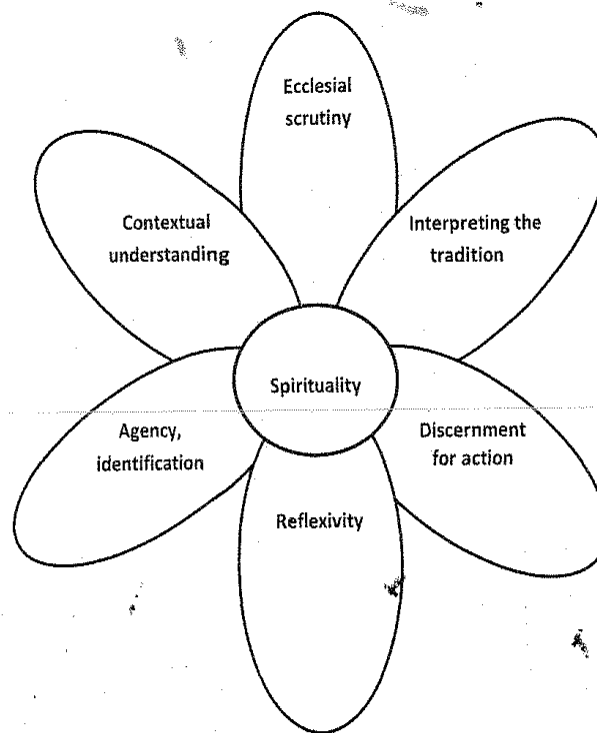
**Figure1: *The Pastoral circle***

Following the adoption of the cycle within the discipline of Missiology at the University OF South Africa (UNISA), Karechi (1999:14) adapted the cycle by adding a new dimension of spirituality at the centre of the cycle. The confusion on the meaning of the term spirituality has been correctly pointed out by Sheldrake (1998:198) when asserting that despite the frequent use of the term, there is great confusion about the exact meaning of Spirituality. In view of this, I regards Spirituality as the aspect of an individual's intimate relationship with God. This particular perspective is common amongst the black Pentecostal Christians. Spirituality furthermore, became the core that guided all the other elements of the pastoral circle. The pastoral circle as adapted by Karechi is presented in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2: *The pastoral circle as adapted by Karechi***

Meanwhile, Kritzinger (2011:50) further adapted the circle and then renamed it the 'praxis matrix'. He maintained that the same praxis can be used in more than one way. It can be used as a mobilising tool when studying the mission of particular black Pentecostal Christians or organisations. Again, it can also be used as an analytical framework when aiming to understand God's mission on earth. Figure 3 below depicts the praxis matrix as adapted by Kritzinger.



**Figure3: *The Praxis Matrix***

### **1.7.1 The mission praxis in the context of challenging heteronormativity**

The usage of the cycle of mission praxis in this study as the research design has followed the adaptation made by Kritzinger as shown above. Nevertheless, some alterations were made in order to cover some relevant aspects unique to the context and content of this study. The first observable alteration that was made is visible in the application phase of the praxis matrix. When applying the praxis matrix in this study, I integrated following dimension and applied them simultaneously. The dimension of Contextual understanding and Ecclesial scrutiny were merged. Whilst on the other hand, I combined the dimension of discernment with that of reflexivity.

Likewise, the element of spirituality remained at the centre of the cycle similar to the early adaptations by Karechi (1999). Still, the concept of spirituality as used in my adaptation of the cycle of mission praxis moved from my understanding of Spirituality.

Amongst other things, I understand spirituality as that inner desire to be closer a divine being. In the context of my black Pentecostal Christianity, the same desire is responded to, by the coming together of believers for prayer, worship and fellowship All that is fulfilled through following the directions of the Holy Spirit. Again in the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In the same spirituality, the black Pentecostal Christians are sent out to preach the gospel to all human beings including the sexual minorities.

The other remarkable change was observable by the addition of the term “Person centred” to the element of agency. I borrowed the term from other scholars such as Du Toit (2003:1) and Gobbler and Schenck (2009:38-41) who even though they used it in a different contexts I thought it to be relevant to this study. The preference for the term “person centred” used in this adaptation was also influenced by the black Pentecostal background where personal conversation and agency is often emphasised. After receiving Christ as their personal saviour, black Pentecostal Christians go further and focus on other people who also need salvation. They then, strive to reach out to them through prayer and preaching of the gospel. That act can be defined as person centeredness.

The ideology of engaging anthropological methods as used by Henkela (2011:222) carried amongst other things the similar sentiments enshrined in the person centred approach used in this study. Different from Hankela in her initial use of Anthropological methods where she combined it with Systematic theological approach, here I used it in this study to stress the importance of person-centeredness in the missiological sense. This view is critical dealing with the all the marginalised groups including the sexual minorities. As a result of adopting the person centred approach, Missiology and mission practitioners can consider the importance of the life of the person they are encountering during their mission activities. The worldviews, feelings and the understanding of God as possessed by the recipient of mission activities becomes central to when defining local congregation’s mission praxis.



Furthermore, rather than inconsiderately imposing legalistic rules and regulations, the black Pentecostal Christians can display the love for their fellow human beings as a priority in doing mission. With that approach, every human being irrespective of their sexuality will be regarded as important before the eyes of God. Contrary to the hierarchies that are often emphasised even in different contexts where those in the margins are treated differently from the rest of the highly ranked members, the person centred approach sees everyone equally. Figure 4 below illustrates how I used Kritzinger's adapted praxis matrix in this study.



**Figure 4: *The adaptation of the praxis matrix in this study***

The use of the adapted praxis matrix was a viable option for this study. I engaged all the dimensions of the cycle with the importance of a human life and human experience in my mind. Again, in order to understand the realities of the sexual minorities in Polokwane my immersion into the actual lives of the sexual minorities was critical.

Furthermore, in his encounter with the sexual minorities I also considered their realities and frame of reference to be a starting point of doing missions. My position as an ally of the Limpopo LGBTI Proudly Out<sup>27</sup> placed me in a better position of applying the person centred approach. During the dimension of Agency I therefore, told my story which was formed by listening to the stories of the sexual minorities in my community.

Equally, during the dimension of contextual understanding, I scrutinised the realities of heteronormativity happening within the context of Polokwane. I also analysed the praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians as manifesting in the mission praxis of my local congregation. The analysis aimed amongst other things at the discovery of the contributing factors to the realities that were observed. On the other side, during the interpretation of tradition, I presented a Biblical portion of Scripture in the light of the findings gained in the preceding two dimensions. Then finally, with the discernment for action and reflexivity I presented the envisaged post heteronormative mission praxis. Through reflexivity, I then checked how all the other dimensions used could continuously be integrated to the mission praxis of my faith community in Polokwane as Kritzinger (2008:771-772) suggested.

## **1.8 The research methodology**

This study followed a qualitative research methodological approach. The same understating of qualitative methodology as seeking to gain a deep knowledge of a phenomenon by means of direct and indirect observation or experience of the research context was used (Mouton 2001:113). On the other hand, the qualitative research methodology enabled me to enter the research setting without constrained predetermined assumptions which are common within quantitative inquiries (Patton190:13). Consequently, the qualitative methodology was also compatible with

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<sup>27</sup> The Limpopo Province Proudly Out is an organisation in the Polokwane that represents the concerns of the LGBTI community within the city and the entire Limpopo province. Furthermore, the organisation educates the members of the community, government and non-government sectors about the realities and the rights of the LGBTI community.

the research design used in this study. The dimension of person centred Agency complemented the qualitative research's emphasis on the need for researchers to physically participate in their research settings. I therefore, took advantage of that compatibility and applied the qualitative methodology in this study. In the next section I turn to the element of sampling method used in this study.

## **1.9 Sampling method**

This study used the Snowballing sampling technique. This method is sometimes called networking (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992:27). Precisely, the snowballing was understood by Tylor and Bogdan (1984:24) to be an act where researchers would first start with a small number of people, win their trust and then ask them to refer others so they can also participate. I used the method in that same manner in this study. It served as a way of inviting participants in the research. This method was therefore, viable looking at sensitivity of the research topic. It assisted in the manner of selecting participants. Otherwise, that process would have been difficult. I could not have abruptly selected the participants by merely considering their outward appearance or perceived categorisations.

### **1.9.2 The characteristics of the sample**

The sexual minorities sample consisted of people identifying as LGBTI, MSM and WSW within the Polokwane. On the side of the black Pentecostal Christians however, the members of the (CWC) dominated the number of participants. However, there were also some other participants from other black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. Since the study focused on both the black Pentecostal Christians and society, some willing members of the community in Polokwane also contributed in the research.

## **1.11 Data collection techniques**

I used the Qualitative data collection techniques to generate and collect data during the study. For the purpose of this study I only focussed on the focus groups, interviews

and participant observations respectively. The next section presents the manner in which I implored these techniques.

### **1.10.1 Focus groups**

I used four focus groups consisting of ten members each to form the focus groups. Their purpose was to explore the same questions that were asked during individual's interviews. The focus groups here included a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain the participant's perceptions on the position of heteronormativity in Polokwane and also in the mission praxis of the CWC. The whole exercise aimed at obtaining relevant data from a permissive, non-threatening environment as (De Vos 2002:306) suggested. Again, the focus groups were conducted in a form of encounter between myself and the participants. The process was guided by a similar understanding possessed by Dezin and Lincoln (2013:53. They presented their understanding when asserting that:

Focus groups have been used to elicit and validate collective testimonies, to give a voice to the previously silenced by creating a safe space for sharing one's life experiences (:53)

In order for me to capture the opinions of the participants in a safe space, I designed the focus groups the following manner: The first group consisted exclusively of the participants from the different sexual minorities in Polokwane. This group gave was given the name "Yellows" in order to easily identify their contribution in the study. The second group consisted only of members from my congregation. They identified themselves as "Power". Then, the third group was formed by ordinary people from the community of Polokwane. They on the other hand referred to themselves as "Lemon". Conversely, the fourth group was a combination of the different individual Christians from other congregations in Polokwane. Similar to the other focus groups they also gave themselves a name, identifying themselves as "The truth".

### **1.10.2 Interviews**

In addition to the focus groups presented as a means of collecting and generating data, I also conducted structured and semi-structured individual interviews. The purpose of the interviews was borrowed from Patton (1990:278). He maintained that the aim of interviews was to gain understanding of the different perspectives from individual participants in the study. I therefore, used this data collecting method to find out the position of heteronormativity and its impact in Polokwane. The similar view was also embraced by Denzin and Lincoln (2013:277) who maintained that:

By using interviews, I can reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as people's subjective experiences and attitudes (:277).

In adopting that similar view and in concurrence with De Vos (2002:292), Braun and Clarke (2013:77), I then, used interviews as a way of engaging in a professional conversation with the participants. The goal of that professional engagement here was to get the participants to talk about their realities and perspectives whilst I was capturing their language and concept in relation to the topic of this study. With the structured interviews, all the questions and the responses categories were predetermined prior to all the interview sessions.

I predetermined the questions in line with Braun and Clarke (2013:78), Matthews and Ross's (2010:477) understanding of qualitative interviews. With this understanding, the use of the semi-structured interviews meant that the exercise was participant-led and also casual in nature. The semi-structured interview also presented amongst other things a space for unrestricted encounter between myself and the participants. The process therefore, unearthed some pertinent issues which constantly came up during the flow of the discussions.

### **1.10.3 Participant observation**

Participant observation also complemented the focus groups and interviews used in this study. I then identified participant observation as a conducive data collection method for the purpose of this study. This method was used to gain visual insight of

the activities and realities as they happen within the research settings. This form of data collection method helped me to achieve an intimate knowledge of the realities of the phenomenon in Polokwane. Such knowledge further helped me to gain sense of the realities as according to Ross (2010: 478), while they occurred in their natural setting without alterations. The similar view of participation was also espoused by Matthews and Patton (1990:10), De Vos (2002:279 and Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 45). They were also guided by an understanding that:

Participant observation is a special form of observation that demands first-hand involvement in the social world. Immersion in the setting allows I to hear, see and begin to experience reality as the participant did (Marshall & Rossman 1989:79)

During this stage, I also attended events, meetings and visited places where the sexual minorities in Polokwane occasionally met. The visits were aimed at purposely observing and engaging the participants within their own spaces. I also visited some black Pentecostal Christian congregations in Polokwane with an aim of observing whether the needs of the sexual minorities were addressed.

### **1.12 The profile of the focus group participants**

I have used codes to refer to the participants from the focus groups namely, Yellows which consisted of the LGBTI, WSW and MSM. Then Power, which was formed by the members of the CWC. Also Lemon, which was formed by the members of the community from Polokwane and lastly, the Truth which included Christians from different black Pentecostal Christian congregations in Polokwane. The age groups of the participants ranged between the ages of 25 and 50 years.

<b>The profile of the focus group participants:</b>							
<b>Group's name</b>	<b>Group composition</b>	<b>Christians</b>	<b>Non-Christians</b>	<b>Ages 25-30</b>	<b>Ages 30-50</b>	<b>Sexual Identity and quantity</b>	<b>Total number of participants</b>

Yellows	LGBTI, WSW and MSM	05	05	05	05	L 02 G 02 B 01 T 01 I 0 W 01 M 03	10
Power	CWC	10	0	05	05	HTS 07 SM 03	10
Lemon	members of the community from Polokwane	0	10	05	05	HTS 10	10
Truth	Christians from other black Pentecosta l Christians in Polokwane	10	0	05	05	HTS 07 SM 03	10

**Table 1: The profile of the participants in the focus group**

### 1.11.1 The schedule of the focus groups

The schedule also indicated the name of the focus group followed by the number of meetings conducted. It also reflected all the venues where the meetings were held. Although all the focus groups were conducted in Polokwane, the meetings were sometimes held in different venues which included some local black Pentecostal Christian's church buildings, participant's homes and office spaces.

Schedule of the focus groups		
Group's name	Total number of meetings	Venues of the meeting
Yellows	03	Polokwane

Power	03	Polokwane
Lemon	03	Polokwane
Truth	03	Polokwane
<b>Total number of Groups meetings</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Polokwane</b>

**Table 2: information about the dates and venues of the focus groups**

### 1.11.2 Composition of the interviews

In Table 3 below I used the term sampling category to indicate the three categories of participants. I also used codes instead of the real names of the participants in order to maintain anonymity. Similar to the focus groups, the participants were also between the ages of 25 and 50 years. The Participants from the category of the sexual minorities identified themselves as LGBTI, WSW and MSM. Again, the religious and denominational background of the participants were also included in order to show how they influenced the participants' view on heteronormativity.

<b>The profiles of the Participants during the semi-structured interviews</b>							
<b>Participant</b>	<b>Sampling category</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Age Groups</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Sexual orientation/ category</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Denomination</b>
A 1	Black Pentecostal Christian	Sepedi	35-40	Male	Heterosexual	Christianity	Pentecostal
A2	Black Pentecostal Christian	Sepedi	45-50	Male	Heterosexual	Christianity	Pentecostal
A3	Black Pentecostal Christian	Xitsonga	25-30	Female	Heterosexual	Christianity	Pentecostal
A4	Black Pentecostal Christian	Tshivenda	31-35	Male	Heterosexual	Christianity	Pentecostal



A5	Black Pentecostal Christian	Sepedi	25-30	Female	Heterosexual	Christianity	Pentecostal
A6	Black Pentecostal Christian	Sepedi	25-30	Female	Heterosexual	Christianity	Pentecostal
B1	Sexual Minority	Tshivenda	30-35	Male	Bisexual	Christianity	Pentecostal
B2	Sexual Minority	Xitsonga	40-45	Female	Lesbian	Christianity	Pentecostal
B3	Sexual Minority	Sepedi	25-30	Male	Gay	Christianity	Pentecostal
B4	Sexual Minority	Sepedi	35-40	Female	Bisexual	None	None
B5	Sexual Minority	Xitsonga	40-45	T	Transgender	None	None
B6	Sexual Minority	Sepedi	35-40	Male	Gay	Christianity	Pentecostal
C1	Community member	Xitsonga	30-35	Female	WSW	None	None
C2	Community member	Tshivenda	35-40	Female	Lesbian	None	None
C3	Community member	Xitsonga	35-40	Male	Bisexual	Christianity	Apostolic
C4	Community member	Sepedi	25-30	Female	Heterosexual	Christianity	Zionist
C5	Community member	Sepedi	25-30	Male	MSM	Christianity	Mainline
C6	Community member	Tshivenda	30-35	Female	Heterosexual	None	None

D1	Black Pentecostal Christian	Sepedi	25-30	Male	MSM	Christianity	Pentecostal
D2	Community member	Xitsonga	25-30	Female	Heterosexual	Christianity	Mainline
D3	Sexual minority	Xitsonga	40-45	Male	MSM	None	None
D4	Black Pentecostal Christian	Sepedi	25-30	Female	Heterosexual	Christianity	Pentecostal
D5	Sexual minority	Xitsonga	30-35	Male	Gay	Christianity	Zionist
D6	Community member	Sepedi	40-45	Male	Heterosexual	African	None

**Table 3: *The profile of the participants during the interviews***

### **1.12 The research instrument**

The interview question sheet was used here as the research instrument. In line with the qualitative research methodology, I did not aim at quantifying the interviews conducted. However, the end of the process was determined by arriving at the saturation point (Kumar, 2005:165). At that point the ending of the process was determined when new data was no longer emerging from the responses of the interviews conducted. However, also the commonalities and sometimes the peculiarity of certain themes arising from the interviews qualified certain responses to be regarded as relevant data to be considered in the findings of this study.

## **1.14 Data analysis**

I did not do the data collection process and then waited till the end of the study to analyse the data. On the contrary, I opted for the approach integration of data collection and analysis done simultaneously. By integrating the two, the focusing and shaping of the study were easily achieved as Glesne and Peshkin (1992:127) also highlighted. The integration of data analysis and collection was further built on the strength of the qualitative methods that amongst others, the inductive nature of qualitative research also helps in building theory and interpretation from the perspectives of the participants (Ezzy 2002:61).

The complete process of analysing the data collected was inclusive of three critical elements. The first element entailed data reduction, where the collected data was selected, focused and then transformed from field notes and transcripts. Following that element was data display, at that stage data was organised and compressed in order to draw conclusions and verification of the right action. The last element was the process of drawing conclusions and verification of the data collected as understood by Miles and Huberman (1994:10-11). The whole process of analysing data was complemented by using the data analytic files.

### **1.13.1 The data analytic files**

Consequently, as a way of keeping track of the data analysis process I opted to use the data analytic file as described by Glesne and Peshkin (1992:128-129). These files served as an instrument that helped me to keep track of the useful data. The files were therefore, organised by generic categories of interview questions, people interviewed and places where the interviews took place. The use of the analytic files made it to make sense of the data collected by placing the data in sequential order. Furthermore, they also helped in the validation of the data and in checking of the trustworthiness of the research findings (:146-147)

## **1.14 Definition of key concepts**

Similar to De Gruchy and Germond (1997:9) in my defining of the key concepts used in this study I was not oblivious of the fact that in respect of the topic of this study language is a contested terrain. Therefore, in defining these concepts I am not in any way attempting to universalise the concepts. Again, I am also aware that some of the terms used may not be understood or used exactly in the same way by people in different contexts. I have therefore, in this study used the following concepts which are worth further clarity

### **1.14.1 Heteronormativity**

The explicit or implicit pervasive assumptions by individuals and societies that heterosexuality is the norm for biological sex, sexual orientation and gender identity. This assumption grants heterosexual a hegemonic position and therefore, any sexual practice or act that do not conform to heterosexuality is regarded as deviant, unnatural, abnormal and worth of being corrected

### **1.14.2 Post-Heteronormative**

A state whereby individuals and societies begin to understand and also accept that heterosexuality was not a norm for every human being. There are those who have other sexual orientations and gender identities other than heterosexuality

### **1.14.3 Sexuality**

This term refers to the cultural notions of pleasures, social and bodily interchanges ranging from erotic, desire and affections.

### **1.14.3 Gender**

A concept formulated to make a distinction between a biological and social construction of what entails to be a man or woman

### **1.14.4 Non-normative Sexualities**

Sexual orientations and gender which are regarded by the society as not conforming to the common sexual practices, in particular as opposed to heterosexuality

#### **1.14.5 Sexual Minorities**

Although the term is sometimes questionable, since other people decide not to disclose their sexual preferences therefore, making it difficult to make numerical rationalities. The term was used here to refer to the LGBTI, MSM, WSW and non-gender conforming persons.

#### **1.14.6 Heterosexuality**

This term has been used in this study to refer to a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to another person of the opposite sex

#### **1.14.7 Homosexuality**

To be sexually and emotionally attracted to a person of the same-sex

#### **1.14.8 Homophobia**

The fear of homosexual people that commonly results in hatred, discrimination and persecution of that particular person

#### **1.14.9 Bisexuality**

Sexually and emotionally attracted to both people of the same-sex and also these of the opposite sex

#### **1.14.10. To be in the closet**

To keep one's sexual orientations and preferences or gender identity as a secret

#### **1.14.11. Coming out**

The process of where people accepts their sexual orientations or gender identity and or decides to come to the open about it

#### **1.14.12 Mission Praxis**

The activities of a local black Pentecostal Christians or congregation which entails participating in the mission of God of saving, healing and transforming societies.

#### **1.14.13 Black**

The emphasis on black here is made to distinguish the racial lines especially in contrast between a white and a black person.

#### **1.14.14 Pentecostal Christians**

The adherents of a Christian tradition which originated at Azusa's street in early 1900s. Their spirituality emphasise the importance of the Holy Spirit as a starting point in a person's Christian life. They also maintain that amongst other signs of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues as guided by the Holy Spirit.

#### **1.15 Ethical considerations**

The consciousness of adhering to the ethical principles governing the research practice was critical to me during the cause of this study. Therefore, amongst other ethical research principles I had to make sure that during the study, the following ethical directives were adhered to at all times: Participants took part on the study voluntarily without being put under duress. They were also informed prior to their participation that they can willingly terminate their participation at any stage of the study without being compelled to state their reasons for termination. Again, permissions were obtained in all places, events and formal gatherings where I went as a participant observer (Glesne & Peshkin 1992:112-124). Due to the sensitivity of the study, anonymity and confidentiality was maintained by opting to use the code or pseudonyms in reference to participants. Finally, participants who were interviewed had to sign a consent form before the process could start.

#### **1.16 Chapters outline**

This study consist of five chapters arranged in the following manner: Chapter one served as an orientation to the study. As an introductory chapter it dealt amongst other things with the background information of the whole research process. Again, the chapter further laid a foundation for the rest of the study. It did that by providing information on the important elements of the study which included the problem statement, research question, literature review, the research structure and the

research methodology. Finally, it presented a section on the adherence of the ethical principles

Chapter two on the other hand has been titled: The story of my life with the sexual minorities in Polokwane. This chapter moved from the aspirations of Agency which is the second dimension of the praxis matrix. Accordingly, it looked at the dimension of agency through the parameters of the person centred approach. In order to achieve that, the chapter used the narrative method to locate my agency and also to look at the power dynamics behind the realities in the lives of the sexual minorities in Polokwane. Finally, I incorporated the dimension of agency with the data collection method. That process helped me in the telling and listening to the heteronormative related stories of the sexual minorities in Polokwane.

The third chapter presents the research findings gained from Chapter two of the study. It followed the second dimension of the praxis matrix in order to understand the Polokwane context. However, the concept of the context here included the findings from the scrutiny made of both the realities of the sexual minorities and also the mission praxis the CWC in Polokwane.

Chapter four presents a theological reflections based on the third dimension of the praxis matrix. The process was done through the missiological focus on the re-reading of the Biblical Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10). The re-reading of this parable was used to advocate for a mission praxis which searches the good in the lives of the sexual minorities. Again, the same mission praxis sought to pave way for the transformation of the mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. From that perspective therefore, the plight of the sexual minorities which amongst other things are the results of hegemonic position of heteronormativity were taken as point of departure in doing Christian mission in Polokwane.

Finally, chapter five titled as mission as going out to see the good in the lives of the sexual minorities presents strategies for a Post- heteronormative mission praxis in Polokwane. This chapter was based on the two dimensions of the praxis matrix of discernment for action and reflexivity. In this I made the conclusion of the study by proposing for a new mission praxis in Polokwane. Amongst other things the possibility of the development of a post-heteronormative mission praxis was then presented. Based on the data from the preceding three chapters, the practical strategies of engaging in a mission from a new transformed angle was presented. The chapter finally presented recommendations for future studies on the similar topic. These recommendations were made as a way of paving a way for new discoveries and perhaps address some pertinent aspects omitted by the current study.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **The story of my life with the sexual minorities in Polokwane**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Theologians and mission practitioners are now joining the sexualities minorities in the arena where the hegemonic position of heteronormativity in the society is challenged. This happens as they engage meaningfully with their local communities seeking for ways to transform the current status quo. I concur with Marcella Althaus-Reid that today, there is a generation of Liberation Theologians who are producing a rich reflection on issues of sexuality, ideology and culture (Althaus-Reid 2016:15). Their reflections are often visible in their life stories and experiences with the sexual minorities and their local communities. For that reason, I have used in this chapter the dimension of the person centred identification to tell the story of my experiences during my insertion into the community of Polokwane. I then aligned the same story with the second sub-question outlined in chapter one of this study. The whole process in this chapter followed the story telling approach. I therefore applied that approach here with an understanding that everyday lives involves an active, unconscious, process by which presented information is combined with relevant pre-understanding of the subject(Ezzy 2002:6).

On the other hand my pre-understanding of issues related to heteronormativity also played a pivotal role in the narrative. That pre-understanding guided the process of data collection during this stage. I was as a result, in a better position of knowing what information to look for and the possible sources which could provide it. In addition to listening to the stories, it was also during this stage that I conducted the systematic study using the individual interviews, focus group interviews and observations. The findings gained through these data collection techniques and some stories told as I was in the community are presented in Chapter 3 of this study. In the next section I first presents the importance of listening to other people's stories in order to tell ours in a more trustworthy manner.

### **2.1.1 The importance of listening to other people's stories**

The formulation of my story is therefore, built on the stories of the sexual minorities, ordinary members of the community and also some black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. Their stories were critical in this narrative because the story of an individual person is not complete without those of others (Lee 1995:7-8). This understanding was also emphasised by Taylor and Bogdan (1984:7) when asserting that:

By observing people in their everyday lives, listening to them talking about what was in their minds, and looking at the documents they produce, the qualitative researcher obtains first-hand knowledge of social life unfiltered through concepts, operational definitions, and rating scales.

It was against this backdrop that Kotze and Kotze (2001:41), Meylahn (2011:141) and Schenck, Nel and Louw (2010:81) also showed that there is no single story that can claim to represent the stories of the entire society. Nevertheless, in each individual story, common themes applicable to other stories can be delineated. Therefore, in my presentation of the story here, I was not oblivious that each story deserves to be treated with respect and according to its own merits. I thus, present my story in this chapter taking into cognisance all these factors. Before presenting my story I will first locate the geographical area of Polokwane. Thereafter I will present my autobiography which is linked to my person centred identification process in Polokwane.

### **2.1.2 The geographical settings of Polokwane**

Polokwane is the capital city of the Limpopo province. The area is situated about 320 kilometres north of the famous city of Johannesburg. Although the area has some considerable infrastructural developments, it is still predominately rural. There are a number of villages including Ga-Maboi, Makotopong and Sengatane closer to the city. It also has three major Townships nearby which are called Seshego, Mankweng and Lebowa kgomo. In addition, Polokwane is predominated by the Sepedi, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, IsiNdebele, English and Afrikaans speaking people.

The migrants from the neighbouring countries of Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique are also found in the city. There are also some other few foreign nationals coming from Somalia, Nigeria and India. There is therefore, in the city a combination of cultures, traditions and different religious practices. These again, influenced the perceptions about homosexuality and heteronormativity. Most people still hold the common view of homosexuality as an un-African, un- Christian and un-natural. Consequently, heteronormativity is generally accepted as something good by both the black Pentecostal Christians and the entire community. I will now turn to the geographical settings of the Polokwane area, below is the map showing the area of Polokwane.



**Figure5: The map showing the area of Polokwane and some surrounding areas:**  
Source: ([www.google.co.za](http://www.google.co.za) 2017)

### 2.1.2 My journey with the sexual minorities in Polokwane

My journey with the sexual minorities in Polokwane started in 2004 after completing my pastoral training at the Nicholas Bhengu Theological College (NBTC)<sup>28</sup> in Mayerton, Gauteng Province (GP). My main focus within my congregation and

<sup>28</sup> The NBTC is a seminary institution of the AOG name after Rev Nicholas Bhengu who was the founder of the Assemblies of God Movement. The movement is one of the biggest black Pentecostal black Pentecostal Christians in the Southern Africa. The seminary presented the theological training for the AOG pastors who were in the process of going to fulltime pastoral ministry. The curriculum of the training was designed in line with the Pentecostal tradition

ministering to the community were people's spiritual lives and their need to be receive Christ as their personal saviour. I was not primarily concerned about their social challenges, as a matter of fact, the realities of the sexual minorities were not regarded at all. I was taught from my religious upbringing within the black Pentecostal Christian congregation that homosexuality was a sin against God. The only remedy for homosexuals was to repent and ask God for forgiveness. This understanding therefore, shaped my views of the sexual minorities and also guided how I related to them.

It was during the time of insertion and community ministry in Polokwane however, that my views were gradually transformed. Amongst other things, the stories of the black Pentecostal Christians who did not know how to relate to their homosexual children, some LGBTI members of our congregation who felt that they were not welcomed in the congregation, spouses who discovered that their partners were having sexual affairs with others of their same-sex and they were looking for answers from the black Pentecostal Christians influenced the transformation. Again, there were some stories told which indicated the oppressive elements of heteronormativity which the sexual minorities were grappling with. These stories had an impact in the understanding of the mission of God in the lives of the sexual minorities. I am therefore, presenting my autobiography in the next section so that I can clearly show how my aground and upbringing influenced my journey.

## **2.2 My autobiography**

I used my autobiography here as an introduction of my story. The autobiography can also help in locating my position in the narrative. It further points to the journey that contributed in my current position regarding the subject. It is also undisputable that people's attitudes towards the sexual minorities are influenced by their childhood's experiences as Kritzinger pointed out (2008:77). Although Kritzinger was not particularly referring to attitudes towards the sexual minorities, but to the society in general, his understanding can be applicable in the context of this study. In the next section therefore, I will present my autobiography. It shows amongst other things how

my early childhood experiences shaped by current views regarding heteronormativity and the mission of the black Pentecostal Christians.

### **2.2.1 My early childhood years**

I was born in Tzaneen, a small town in the Limpopo province of South Africa. My parents were members of a local Pentecostal congregation. As children we then followed them and attended the same congregation. My parents often stressed the importance of personal experience where one accept the Lord Jesus as personal saviour. On the other hand however, issues related to sex and sexuality were rarely discussed. Whenever my parents and other elderly community members warn against engaging in pre-marital sex they used figure of speech. It was often through an indirect speech that the message was conveyed. The common saying that was often used was the Xitsonga metaphor which can be understood in English to be saying that one should not play with members of the opposite sex. The saying was understood and interpreted to mean that young boys and girls should not engage in sexual activities.

Another common trend which also marked my youth days in both my local community and the black Pentecostal Christian circles was similar to what is understood now as the *policed sexuality*<sup>29</sup>. This trend manifested amongst other things by an exaggerated manner of warning the youths against sexual immorality, fornication and promiscuity. This warning was often given by the elderly people in our black Pentecostal Christian congregations as well in the community. The elderly people in the congregation did not trust us as young people in regard to matters of sexuality. Our behaviours were always extremely monitored. On the other hand however, *the policing of sexuality*<sup>30</sup> was to an extent that the youth could eventually be scared to enter into healthy

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<sup>29</sup> The term policed sexuality refers to the tendency by certain individuals to take it upon them to watch and guard other people's sexual behaviours with the aim of preserving the acceptable sexual practices within a specific society.

<sup>30</sup> The policing of sexuality is also understood by Lewis (2011:207) as a tendency of viewing African sexuality as involving Africans who are led by instincts and therefore, are unable to control their feelings.

relationships with members of the opposite sex. Even mere friendships between boys and girls were always viewed with suspicion. Therefore, as young boys we were always conscious of not associating with girls in our community. The assumptions that dominated were that sexual activities could only happen between members of the opposite sex. The elderly people did not consider the possibilities of same-sex relationships happening amongst us.

However, as a result of these policing of as youth we grew up more closely to members of our own sex. We did not want to be labelled to be promiscuous because of playing with girls. As the result, that has led to the ambiguity of the relationships that were common between us as young boys. Now in retrospect, some of the relationships then were suspicious. Although they were never labelled as homosexuals, it would have been difficult to distinguish if our relationships were just *homo-sociality*<sup>31</sup>, *homoeroticism*<sup>32</sup> or *homosexuality*<sup>33</sup>. Some of these relationships which happened under the disguise of friendships were even stretched further. Amongst other things, we visited each other as boys at our homes and sometimes overnighting. The bonding was sometimes so strong that the term friendship could not correctly define what was happening amongst the boys.

Although there was no evidence showing that these relationships were not as our parents or our culture deemed it were. The possibility of a disguised *homo-sociality*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Homo-sociality is seen as the desire for male bonding which is often expressed in the pursuit of common hobbies such as sports, fishing, auto repairs and maintenance. Such bonding are often raised by the desire of men in the quest to discover their masculinity. Such engagements therefore, does not include any sexual attraction or activities (Buchbinder 2013:82)

<sup>32</sup> In the case of homoeroticism it just a sexual attraction between members of the same sex ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com) accessed 20 August 2017)

<sup>33</sup> Homosexuality on the other hand involves bonding amongst persons of the same sex and included emotional and sexual attraction happening amongst members of the same sex (Brown et al 2011:xxix)

<sup>34</sup> I have coined the term disguised homo-sociality to refer to a practice where homosexual relationships are often disguised as mere homo-sociality.

cannot be utterly overruled. Looking back now I still remember that some of these relationships were indeed same-sex sexual relationships. Because of the heteronormativity in my community, people often took it for granted that boys could not engage in same-sex practices. Moreover, emphasis continued to be made on the dangers of heterosexual pre-marital acts. That was done without being bothered to address the possibility of homosexual activities. I therefore, concluded that my community was conservative when coming to sexual issues. This was also made evident by the reluctance of open discussions about sex and sexual issues. Sexuality and precisely homosexuality was often associated with the concept of taboo<sup>35</sup>. I recall when my sister asked my mother about a man we saw when visiting another village. She wanted to know why that particular man was having gestures resembling a feminine character. In her response my mother told her that what she was asking was *taboo*.

Moreover, gender assigned roles were also often emphasised in my community. The elder members of the community often monitored the behaviours of every young person as they grow in the community. Any boy who behaved in an effeminate manner or enjoyed doing chores that were perceived to belong to women would often be reprimanded. In retrospect of the years when growing up in my local black Pentecostal Christians, I can conclude that heteronormativity existed however, it was often entrenched unintentionally. It was therefore, not assigned any particular name although it was prevalent and normalised. Similarly, homosexual tendencies were common in the community however, they were not assigned any prescriptive name or meaning. There are stories often told in the community of boys as well of men having thigh and penetrative sex. These acts were said to be voluntary and were just regarded as play by those who participated in them. There was also a high level of secrecy which contributed in the community's denial about their existence.

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<sup>35</sup> My community put an emphasis on sexuality as a private and secret matter, therefore, the word taboo is often used to deter community members to talk openly about sexual related issues.

There were also cases of an unintentional entrenchment of heteronormativity in the black Pentecostal Christians. It manifested by the arrangement for marriages for men who have reached ages considered to be fit for marriage however, were not getting married. I likened the practice to what Epprecht (2008:155) called the normal-seeming marriages. These marriages were also common<sup>36</sup> amongst other black Pentecostal Christians in our village. Spouses were therefore, arranged for the men by some elderly members of the black Pentecostal Christian congregations. The elderly members would often secretly arrange a prospective spouse and then compel the men to marry them. However, this practice was commonly done without the consent of the men in question. Again, the men were often not even asked about their sexual orientations or preferences when such marriages were arranged. The possibility of some of these men having a different sexual orientation apart from heterosexuality was not even entertained. Their motive behind their reluctance in getting married was often not established prior to the marriage arrangements.

### **2.2.2 My experiences as a black Pentecostal Christian pastor**

I was already active in the Assemblies of God AOG youth programs at an early age of thirteen. Later when I turn eighteen, I became a full member of the black Pentecostal Christians. It was in the AOG that I developed my Christian faith and also my understanding of the Pentecostal Christian mission. My congregation in Polokwane rarely use the term mission, on the contrary they often use the term ministry to refer to the same mission activities of the black Pentecostal Christians. There, was also an emphasis in the black Pentecostal Christians of what was commonly known as the *born again experience*<sup>37</sup>. This notion played a role in forming the general moral standards of the black Pentecostal Christians. It was often believed amongst the black Pentecostal Christians that when people are born again, they become intrinsically

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<sup>36</sup> This practice might be strange to people coming from other context however it was a common practice in our village. Issues of marriage were not merely an individual person's issue however, the elderly usually led the process.

<sup>37</sup> The born again experience also denotes amongst other things the conversion of sinners, holding with high esteem the speaking with tongues and the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Bosman 2006:8-10) .



heterosexual. As a results, heteronormativity gained currency through these unquestioned assumptions. Again, through the born gain experience, priority was often given to what was termed or considered “spiritual” matters.

Social issues and concerns were rarely part of the mission agenda. As a result, issues regarding the marginalisation of the sexual minorities were understood to be not the part of mission. The predominating idea was that of problematizing homosexuality. This was done through sermons and also discrimination that was manifested when double standards were used. Heterosexual Christians were often seen as the true Christians and the opposite was the case with those who identified with non-heterosexual practices. In the occasions when issues related to the sexual minorities were mentioned, the focus was often on problematizing homosexuality.

The turning point for my views was in 2009 when I left the AOG and joined the CWC in Polokwane. My new congregation also followed the black Pentecostal Christian tradition<sup>38</sup>. In the few years of my ministry in the new congregation my view of God’s mission was gradually transformed. I now began to be more concerned and involved with the social lives of people in my congregation and community. This transformation came about as a result of the CWC view of ministry. Pastors in this congregation were automatically the leaders of the team responsible for the community outreach programs. These community programs were not meant for addressing issues involving the sexual minorities. However, it gave me an access to several community problems which emerged as a consequence of the unquestioned status of heteronormativity.

Therefore, it was in the CWC where I formally bumped into the phenomenon of heteronormativity. The discovery was made possible by the results of my transformed understanding of mission. I gained the new view of what mission entails through my academic engagement with UNISA. While trying to find my stance in the field of

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<sup>38</sup> The use of this term here refers to the way of worship, their interpretation and understanding of the Biblical teachings, also their common way of life

Missiology, I also developed a view which embraced the importance of addressing social challenges. With this view, mission practitioners cannot leave any community or structural problem unchallenged. Transforming the society becomes the main aim of the local congregations.

As I served in the local community outreach team I realised that there were some serious concerns which could be directly linked to heteronormativity. Amongst other things I also discovered that the sexual minorities were marginalised, oppressed and rejected by both the black Pentecostal Christians and society. I also noticed that even though some members of my congregation were affected by heteronormativity, they did not have a platform in the black Pentecostal Christians to speak about their challenges. I tried several times to show the importance of addressing issues affecting sexual minorities, however, in most cases my request was often met with oppositions. Some black Pentecostal Christians held the view that addressing these issues might present the black Pentecostal Christians as condoning homosexuality. I further asked informally some LGBTI members who were in the open about their sexuality how they were treated in the black Pentecostal Christian congregations. The majority pointed out that they received minimal support from the black Pentecostal Christians.

The event that challenged the CWC to consider discussing the topic happened in 2012. The formal deliberations began during our annual youth camp. For the first time the youths openly challenged the status quo. They began to question the relevance of our black Pentecostal Christianity in the lives of people who did not conform to the heterosexual identity. They also bluntly pointed out that the discrimination of the sexual minorities was not acceptable. Consequently, the youth challenged the CWC to review its stand on the issue. They saw advocating for the needs and rights of the sexual minorities in and outside the black Pentecostal Christian circles as part of reaching out and saving souls. It was that challenge that led the CWC to formally seek to address the phenomenon. From that point onward, my congregation started to take seriously the issues raised by the position of heteronormativity in both its confines and

community. In the next section, I will discuss the manner in which the youth camp brought this transition.

### **2.2.3 The CWC Annual Youth Camp**

The CWC youth camp is an annual event which is usually held during the winter school holidays. The camp usually consists of the youth from other CWC congregations in Mpumalanga (MP) and Limpopo provinces (LP). Again, some youth from other Pentecostal denominations around Polokwane are often invited to join the camp. The number of attendees usually reaches one hundred or more. Young people converge on a Friday for the opening of the camp and usually go back home at the end of the camp on a Sunday afternoon. My local CWC congregation usually makes arrangements for accommodation at a particular lodge. They also make sure that the conference venue is ready for the whole weekend. However, the older members and parents usually join the camp on Sunday morning during the closing service.

As part of the camp, the program often have a time when the youth will sit around the fire, have braai and casually discuss social issues. The guests in the program often include professionals from different fields. Motivational speakers and pastors are also part of the guests who come and address issues related to the youth in the contemporary society. They also play some team building games and other sporting codes. Additionally, they also set aside some time to pray and worship together. They conduct Bible studies sessions and allow the youth attending the camp to ask questions related to their future career and future life partners.

Discussions around issues of sexual orientations, homosexuality and heteronormativity were officially introduced during the 2012 youth camp. The discussions were triggered by some parents who raised concerns about the possibility of the youth engaging in sexual activities during the camp. The parents emphasized that the youth were supposed to be strictly monitored during the camp. Furthermore, they wanted the camp organisers to be strict when allocating rooms for accommodation. They based their concerns on a possibility of what they considered

to be “promiscuity” happening in the rooms during the camp weekend. Their advice was the organisers should ensure that in each room there were no members of the opposite sex sharing. Boys were supposed to share rooms with boys and that was supposed to be the same rule with girls. In order to achieve that the parents further advised the camp organisers to constantly patrol and inspect all the rooms especially during the late night hours.

Some of the young people showed that they were not happy about the overemphasis on the issue raised by parents. They even went further to challenge the notion of same-sex room allocation as a sign being oblivion that there were also same-sex young people in the group. A proposal was therefore, made by the concerned youth that the issue should be addressed as part of the program. The 2013 Youth camp therefore, had a session in which the youth debated issues related to sexual orientation and Christianity. That particular session was held on a Sunday morning during the closing service. That was done deliberately to accommodate the older members of the congregation who were attending that day.

During the deliberations the youth mentioned that heteronormativity<sup>39</sup> was a problem that needed to be addressed by the black Pentecostal Christians. They further showed that most of the black Pentecostal Christians programmes were not inclusive of the needs of the LGBTI young people. Because of the realisation of the importance of the topic, it was therefore, decided that the black Pentecostal Christians should have another special meeting arranged specifically for the topic. The CWC therefore, appointed a task team which was to look at the issues of the ministry and heteronormativity<sup>40</sup>. I was also amongst the group that that formed part of the task team. We were requested to investigate the matter and come back with the findings and recommendations.

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<sup>39</sup> In presenting their case the youth did not use the term heteronormativity, the explained the realities which I interpreted as referring to heteronormativity.

<sup>40</sup> The black Pentecostal Christians did not use the term mission praxis, however they called it ministry which according to I the terms refer to the same activities within his congregation therefore, they ca be used interchangeable.

#### **2.2.4 The CWC special task team**

The task team held their first meeting in October 2013. The meeting was subsequent to the decision made during the camp. The task team consisted of individuals from the different committees. It was formed by two leaders from the youth committee, one member of the children ministry's coordinators, one member from the women fellowship leadership, one member from the men's fellowship leadership, two members from the church board and two members from the community outreach team members. The task team was therefore, appointed and constituted of these eight members from the different congregation's structural committees. A remarkable story regarding the repercussions of heteronormativity was told by one member during the meeting.

She said that she wanted to share the story so that the task team could take seriously the consequences of heteronormativity. Since I was also attending the meeting I then requested to make notes as she was narrating the story. She said that her friend was a member of another black Pentecostal Christians elsewhere. Every morning her spouse would drop her at work and proceed to his workplace. Then later in the afternoon he would collect her so they go home together. However, on that particular day she said her friend was not feeling well at work. She therefore, requested that particular church member to take her home. She had planned to call her husband when she arrive at home. Our church member who was narrating the story said she only dropped her at her gate since she was rushing back to work.

To her surprise, she received a phone call from her friend later the same day. Her friend requested that they should meet at her place urgently. Upon arrival, her friend narrated to her how she caught her spouse having sex with another man in their bedroom. She was devastated because she knew her spouse to be a respected leader in the church. She never thought that he could cheat on her. She was also disappointed at her congregation which always pretended that homosexuality was possible amongst church members.

This story amongst others also confirmed that the silence of the black Pentecostal Christians around the issues of homosexuality is not aiding, on the contrary it contributes in giving the members and community a misleading idea that when homosexual people become Christians, they change and become heterosexual too. As a black Pentecostal Christian myself, my early Christian background did not expose me to the dynamics of non-heteronormative sexualities. I was not aware of the dynamics and the vast number of the issues faced by the sexual minorities. I was therefore, introduced to more realities when I attended the rights of the sexual minorities course at the University of Pretoria (UP). Another aim of attending the course was to broaden my understanding of the subject. Also to help me understand the subject from the human rights perspective. The course also presented a space for me to engage with the LGBTI activists from the different African countries.

#### **2.2.5 The sexual minority's rights within an African context course**

The course was offered by the centre for human rights at UP. The course focused mainly on the human rights aspects related to the sexual minorities. However, it was relevant for me because issues of the impact of culture, religion and Christianity in the lives of the sexual minorities were also deliberated upon during the course. Moreover, apart from its academic focus it also presented a platform for engaging with the LGBTI attendees from other South African and other African countries. Through their stories I also learnt that heteronormativity was a universal problem. Again, that the phenomenon needed to be addressed from all the structures of the society.

Amongst other aspects covered by the course were the in-depth discussions of the terms and concepts such as gender, identity, sexual orientation, LGBTI. Again, the course also addressed the psycho-social perspectives on sexual minority rights and public health of the MSM in relation to HIV/AIDS. It further addressed the issues of Ubuntu and sexual minority rights, same-sex relationships and faith-based arguments, the role of the media in the protection of the LGBTI rights. Additionally, the course also presented an overview of violations of sexual minority rights in Africa and

some domestic legal responses, the sexual minority rights advocacy and litigation, and the politics of the African human rights system were discussed.

There was also some a discussions about the strategic litigation on sexual minority rights in Southern Africa. During the discussion, best practices from countries such as Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe were presented. Finally, the sexual orientation and gender identity rights in the United Nations (UN) was discussed. It therefore, became to me clear that the black Pentecostal Christians should also come on board and join the discourse. There were still other encounters which I had that also contributed in my knowledge of the subject of this study. These encounters also continued to reshape my stance regarding the position of heteronormativity in the society. Additionally, my conceptualisation of the role of Missiology in the subject was developed and made clearer.

### **2.2.6 Insight form the 2016 International world AIDS conference**

I also attended the 21<sup>st</sup> International world AIDS conference (IWAC) in Durban International convention centre (ICC) South Africa. The conference started on the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2016. The problematizing of heteronormativity was fiercely advocated amongst the HIV/AIDS related issues that were addressed. During the conference also, there were exhibitions, seminars and workshops which directly pointed to the need of challenging the marginalisation of the sexual minorities. There was also a film launching session that was dedicated specifically to address the topic of heteronormativity, spirituality and the black Christian's faith in South Africa.

During her presentation at the session that launched her new film called *Ngiyaphila* (“I am well”) *Spirituality and Sexuality*<sup>41</sup>, Mabizela<sup>42</sup> (2016) said that she was often questioned about her welcoming attitude towards the sexual minorities. Her questioning was the results of inviting gays and lesbians in her house to discuss issues related to their wellbeing. Some members of the community and other Christians accused her for compromising the gospel truth by associating with the LGBTI. However, contrary to the community’s expectation of animosity between her as a Christian preacher and the LGBTI community there was peace and love made evident by her public opinions which challenged heteronormativity.

Mabizela then continued to say that her understanding of being a Christian made her to open her house for the LGBTI community who were ostracised in her township. Her understanding of Christianity in relation to the sexual minorities was that centres of worship, including black Pentecostal Christians should be places of healing that also embrace diversities. In her argument she maintained that the IsiZulu word *Ngiyaphila* which is often used as response to greetings should also mean to the sexual minorities that they are well both sexually and spiritually (IAC, 2016). I began to understand that the mission of the black Pentecostal Christians cannot be exclusively heterosexual, God’s love was for every human being irrespective of their gender identities.

During another plenary session the issue of heterosexuality as the only acceptable, normal and natural sexual practice was demystified. The presenters showed that the contemporary era was marked by multi-sexual expressions and orientations. People should start embracing sexual diversities as a fact of life. Furthermore, I also attended a session in one of the seminars that focused on the South Africans’ perceptions about the MSM. It was highlighted there that the society still needed to be educated about

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<sup>41</sup> In the film *Ngiyaphila Spirituality and Sexuality* Reverend Phumzile Mabizela engages different black Pentecostal Christians leaders on issues of sexuality and spirituality. She then emphasised that gays and lesbians also deserve an equal treatment with the rest of society when they come to places of worship.

<sup>42</sup> Reverend Phumzile Mabizela is the Executive Director of the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV/AIDS (genderjustice.org.za: 2016)



the concept of MSM. An emphasis was made that rather than simply criticising the MSM, the society should be educated about the dynamics of men to men sexual relationships. That could in the process help to avert the secrecy around the MSM issues. The secrecy was further labelled as one of the causes that makes to the MSM fear to acquire medical attention when confronted with the realities of HIV/AIDS and other STI's. That according to my understanding it was not exclusively limited to the fear from acquiring medical help, it also included fear to get spiritual guidance from the black Pentecostal Christians.

The same encounter amongst other things also helped me to try and make sense on how heteronormativity could be addressed within the field of Missiology. I further realised that denying the prevalence of the practice in my community and black Pentecostal Christian's circles was not aiding in bringing the solutions. Therefore, in this study I also incorporated the concept of the MSM phenomenon as part of the sexual minorities who are affected by heteronormativity in the society. The next section moves to the moment of I's arrival in Polokwane. However, it starts by providing the glimpse of the geographical settings of the area.

### **2.3 Aligning with the person centred identification process**

The dimension of agency guided my insertion into the realities of the sexual minorities in Polokwane. Again, the process here was done in line with the Praxis matrix structure and methodology (Qualitative research) used in this study. I held the similar understanding of agency as highlighted by Botha when he said:

Agency is not only about listening and learning, but also about a prophetic mission. Again, it is about announcing the reign of God, the reign of justice, equality, truth and fellowship. Not only is the prophetic mission about annunciation, but also about denouncing the evil of sin, injustice, oppression, lies, marginalisation, hunger and ignorance (Botha 2010:188)

Therefore, I engaged the sexual minorities in Polokwane having adopted Botha's understanding and at the same embraced Ezzy's (2002: xii) argument when he said:

Qualitative research is done through establishing relationships with people, places and performances. The best qualitative researchers do not separate their lives from their research, as if people could be understood through distancing themselves from them. Conducting qualitative research is about participating in other people's lives and writing about that participation.

I therefore, started the person centred agency process with an aim of building a positive relationship with the sexual minorities in Polokwane. Therefore, those relationships meant also literally visiting their events and supporting their different activists rallies in the community. In the process I positioned myself as an ally of the sexual minorities. However, at the same time I had to guard against losing my position as a guest and outsider within the realities of the sexual minorities. The reason for being conscious about his position was to ensure that I remain objective and also maintain the status of being the researcher. It was therefore, important that I strike a balance between being a total stranger who stands aloof, separated from the research context and also being an active participant.

In view of trying to maintain that balance I had to adopt the concept of emotional distance as correctly outlined by Kritzing (2008:774). This meant that I had to put aside my personal opinions and immerse myself into the realities of the sexual minorities in Polokwane. Simultaneously, I had to keep my position as researcher in order to remain objective. It then follows that I also needed to advocate for the position of opponents between myself and the sexual minorities. Being an opponent here did not mean opposing the sexual minorities however, it meant that both parties needed to reach an agreement to play the game according to the same rules (:774).

Furthermore, being opponents also meant adopting the willingness to positively oppose and agree with each other where and when necessary. However, the process had to be done with respect thus leaving behind bitterness and the willingness to

destroy each other. It was my view that such relationships were possible if one admitted that even in the research environment, researchers can still learn and also unlearn their certain pre-existing perceptions. That includes amongst other things the knowledge they possessed before they start their research processes. In the next section I discuss the actual activities and encounters which happened as part of my person centred identification process

### **2.3.1 Stories of heteronormativity in Polokwane**

I used pseudonyms in this section in order to maintain confidentiality as Glesne and Peshkin (1992:118-119) suggested. The stories told here happened within the Polokwane. They reveal amongst things the reality of heteronormativity and the impact of its position in the lives of the sexual minorities in both the black Pentecostal Christian's circles and society in Polokwane. Although some of the stories were not initially part of the formal data collection processes, they do however have an impact on the findings of this study. These stories were also helpful in the person centred identification process.

### **2.3.2 The reality of discrimination at the local schools**

The Seshego magistrate court in Polokwane recently ordered the provincial department of Education to pay an amount of Sixty thousand Rand in compensation to a transgendered woman (Botha 2017:1-4). The compensation was as a result of an individual who was frequently harassed by a school principal in one of the schools around Polokwane. Amongst other things the harassment was done based on the fact that the woman identified herself as a transgender. The principal therefore, felt that she was not welcomed in his school. Moreover, he also told other learners to harass her. She was therefore, restricted from singing hymns with other students at school. Furthermore, other learners in following the orders of the principal sexually molested her in the school toilets. Botha further lamented how heteronormativity was being defended by the structures of society when she said:

The fact that the department of Education would dedicate its effort to defending a principal who advocated for harassing a young woman in his school toilets, rather than working on upgrading those facilities to allow safe and inclusive sanitation for all, is rather telling (:3)

I therefore, take the side of the transgendered woman who suffered discrimination at her school. I took this stand in order to apply the person centred approach to the story. It is therefore, her experience that should motivate the mission of the black Pentecostal Christians. Mission here will therefore, take her experience as a point of departure. The action of the principal is therefore, condemned. I therefore, identify with the woman and through her experience I can present a God who takes the side of the downtrodden.

Botha's story triggered my memories about other similar stories I frequently came across in Polokwane and somewhere else. One of the stories that I reminisced about was that of Lesedi. She was a grade nine learner who also identified herself as lesbian. As a result, she was often told by her teacher that being a lesbian was a sign of being demon possessed. Furthermore, the teacher continued to humiliate her by telling her in front of other learners. She was often told that needed Christ in her life who was going to deliver her from her deviant sexuality. On one occasion, the teacher went further and called her in front of other learners to pray and deliver her from what she labelled as *the spirit of lesbianism*<sup>43</sup>.

Again, it is Lesedi's experiences that I seek to identify with. Similar to the transgendered woman who was ostracised, Lesedi's experience should be a point of departure. Mission in this case seek to challenge the action of the teacher. It also presents a different view that contradicts the teacher's behaviour. The God who side with the marginalised cannot support the discrimination of people based on their sexual orientation and gender identities.

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<sup>43</sup> In most cases those who hold on to this view believe that being homosexual is the same as being possessed by an evil spirit.

### **2.3.3 Heteronormative tendencies amongst community members**

Lethabo, a 23 years old man was discriminated by his peers and other parents in his community only because he identified himself as gay. According to his mother other parents told their children to stop associating with her son. She further said that the discrimination was also directed to her as a mother. Her neighbours often made her to feel unwanted in the community. They accused her of having what they called an abnormal child. They also refused her membership in the women *Stokvel*.<sup>44</sup> She claimed that other women told her that she could not join them because she was carrying bad luck that was supposedly contagious. When Lethabo's mother asked her neighbour to explain the reasons they thought she had bad luck, her neighbours told her that her son was a sign of bad luck haunting her life and family.

These stories attested to the prevalence of heteronormativity in Polokwane. Furthermore, they also showed how the sexual minorities were often ill-treated and discriminated against by the society. It also became apparent that those who perpetrate heteronormativity also influence others to do the same. Similar to the experience suffered by Lethabo and his mother, there are still other families who are discriminated against based on the embrace of heteronormativity in the society. I therefore, side with Lethabo and his mother. The action of the community members cannot find a place in the mission of God.

### **2.3.4 Informal encounters with the sexual minorities in Polokwane**

I present in this section stories of my informal encounters with the sexual minorities in Polokwane. This process was guided among other things by what Tailor and Bogdan (1984: 45-46) calls being at the right place at the right time. I did not consciously plan to be in these areas when the incidences happened however, they randomly happened in my presence. I therefore, considered them relevant and so I aligned them

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<sup>44</sup> *Stokfel* is an activity common in most South African black Townships where the members of the community would contribute an agreed amount of money every month. Later at the end of the year they collectively buy groceries in bulks which they amongst themselves.

to his study. I developed a number of ways to gain data in an unobtrusive manner and in the process stumbled upon a number related issues

These situations presented conducive data collection opportunities and were also relevant to the study. Although some of the encounters presented here happened in an informal settings, their contribution to this study is worth recording. All the encounters here were presented in line with the concept of the three postures of encounters. These postures are best defined by Kritzinger. He asserted that that they included the shoulder-to shoulder, face-face and back to back Kritzinger (2008:785). I therefore, applied the understanding postures during my encounters with the local community. The postures further contributed in helping me to respect and take each participant's story seriously.

### **2.3.5 The LGBTI sensitisation workshop**

In August 2014 together with my colleagues attend a workshop arranged by a Limpopo Province LGBTI organisation. The workshop was held in one of the lodges in Polokwane. Amongst other things, the workshop aimed at sensitising the Employee Assistance Practitioners (EAP). It highlighted the realities facing the LGBTI in the workplace. Stories were used during the workshop to show that heteronormativity was having a gruesome repercussions in the lives of the sexual minorities and their families. At the end of the workshop we had to sign a pledge to support the struggles of the sexual minorities in Polokwane. That is where I began to take it myself to be an ally of the LGBTI in Polokwane. Amongst other commitments that came with the position of an ally was to challenge the discrimination of the LGBTI community in every structure of the society.



**Figure6: The researcher taking a pledge to be an ally of the LGBTI in Polokwane.**

In this story, I presented the element of the person centred identification manifested by signing a pledge of becoming an ally of the LGBTI. My role as an ally moves from the premise of understanding mission as considering the experiences of the sexual minorities first. It is their concerns that should guide the development of the mission praxis. In order to fully present the mission of God, the black Pentecostal Christians should listen to the stories of the LGBTI and other sexual minorities groups. Out of these stories therefore, delineate the presence of a God who considers human life to be more important.

### **2.3.6 The Limpopo Province LGBTI and Sex Workers sector meetings**

In my journey as ally, in 2016 I attended another two days Limpopo province LGBTI and Sex workers sector meeting. I was invited as part of the EAP HIV/AIDS management program from my workplace. The meeting was organised by the Limpopo province office of the Premier HIV/AIDS management department. The meeting comprised of the representatives from the LGBTI non-governmental

organisations (NGO's), the NGO's representing the commercial Sex workers and the Limpopo provincial government department's HIV/AIDS programme managers.

During one of the sessions we had to break into groups to discuss different concerns raised by the sexual minorities and sex workers. I attended a group that deliberated on the impact of heteronormativity in Polokwane. During the deliberations the religious and Christian organisations were also pointed out as perpetrators of heteronormativity in the area. One Participant in the group mentioned that many Christians tend to forget that God loved every human being irrespective of their gender and sexual orientations. He said that was manifested by the animosity often faced by the LGBTI when attending the local black Pentecostal Christian congregation. Many other stories were told during the session. They all attested to the need for Christians in Polokwane to transform their attitudes towards the sexual minorities.

A call to all Christians in Polokwane to start supporting the cause of the sexual minorities was made. We all agreed that if Christians in Polokwane can lead the process in the challenge against heteronormativity. In the process the society might follow the same route. I was also invited by one of the black Pentecostal Christian's congregations in Polokwane to address the impact of heteronormativity in the lives of the Christian youth who identified as LGBTI.

### **2.3.7 The session about heteronormativity and the LGBTI Christian youth**

The session on the impact of heteronormativity on the LGBTI youth was organised by my local congregation. Amongst the speakers of the day was a Psychologist, a Social worker and a LGBTI human rights activist who were invited to tackle the subject of heteronormativity from their field of study. My role was to present a perspective from a black Pentecostal Christian's point of view. The congregation's leadership indicated that they decided to have the session after they realised that they were gradually becoming irrelevant by failing to address this sensitive subject. They also wanted to conduct an open discussion about the topic in order to get different perspectives on the subject to help the youth. They also wanted the youth to better understand their



sexuality and sexual orientation issues. In the process therefore, be in position of accepting their sexuality as a gift from God. After my presentation the youths shared more stories and their experiences of heteronormativity amongst both the black Pentecostal Christians and society.

Furthermore, they also asked questions which highlighted that there was a need to address heteronormativity from different angles of the society. Those attending the session mentioned that they were happy that their congregation displayed a progressive attitude by arranging the session for them. One of the youth leaders in that congregation highlighted that the session made him realise that he was welcomed within the congregation irrespective of his gender identity. The figure below show the session in which I made the presentation.



**Figure 7: *The researcher addressing a group of young people during the session on the impact of heteronormativity on the LGBTI youth in the black Pentecostal Christians***

### **2.3.8 The MSM in Polokwane**

I first met Jack at a local gym and we eventually became friends. One day we had a discussion about our studies and other things related to our careers. It was during these discussion that I shared with Jack the subject of my study. After some time Jack disclosed to me that he was identifying himself as MSM. Later he agreed to be a participant in this study. He further gave a consent for his story to be used in the study. In narrating his story, Jack said that although he had a female partner, he was also sexually attracted to other men. He made this discovery while he was still a young boy playing soccer with other boys in the Township.

At the time that Jack narrated his story he was forty years old, married and having two children. However, even though he was a married man he frequently had sexual encounters with other men. On the other hand, Jack did not see himself as bisexual. However, he still considered himself heterosexual. He further said that after discovering his attraction to other men he started to observe fasting and prayer asking God to take away the feeling. To his dismay even after some time of his fasting and prayer the feelings did not disappear.

When he eventually got married he thought that marriage was going to transform his sexual desire. Paradoxically, his attraction to men grew stronger after that. He realised that there was nothing he could do to change his situation. He eventually accepted sexuality as part of his real-self. Jack also said that he loved his spouse and family and he was not prepared to leave his marriage. However, his dilemma was that he had reached a stage where he was no longer fighting against his sexual attraction for other men. He was worried because the messages he often heard in his congregation were often condemning his sexuality. He was also worried that he might lose his spouse and family if he can disclose what was happening in his life.

As a result of his dilemma, One Sunday after black the church service he told his local pastor about his situation. He disclosed to the pastor expecting to receive support and spiritual counselling. On the contrary, the pastor told him that if he was not prepared

to change his lifestyle then he was no longer welcomed in the church. During the same week after his confession Jack was nominated for a position of a secretary in the men's fellowship. During the service where the election were to take place, the pastor called Jack to the office. He then ordered him to decline the nomination. Jack withdrew his nomination in order to comply with the pastor's instructions. The pastor commended Jack for his action however, he further mentioned that if Jack does not discard what has been termed as *after nine*<sup>45</sup> tendencies, he will be expelled from the men fellowship. Jack told the pastor that he has eventually decided to accept his sexuality and there was nothing he could do to change it.

Consequently, the pastor terminated Jack's membership and told him to look for another church. Jack was frustrated because he loved his black Pentecostal Christian congregation and was not prepared to leave. He further said that he felt that his own pastor has let him down by failing to understand his situation. He then decided to stop going to that congregation however, he did not join another church. Moreover, he also claimed that he continued with his life of prayer and meditation on Biblical verses. However, he was not prepared to join another black church because for him the black Pentecostal Christians are equally discriminating. In the next section I will proceed to my experience at the LGBTI get-together function in Polokwane.

### **2.3.9 The 2014 LGBTI function in Polokwane**

In July 2014 I attended an evening get together function for the LGBTI in Polokwane. I was invited to the function by one of my friends who eventually became a participant in this study. I then told that friend that I also going to invite my other two friends the event. One of the friends that I invited was Grace who was a family friend. She also came from one of the black Pentecostal Christian congregation in Polokwane. The other friend was John. He was my old time friend but did not attend any church. Upon our arrival at the guest house where the function was held, things started to change.

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<sup>45</sup> The term *after nine* is often used in the South African Townships to refer to masculine married man who secretly have sexual intercourse with other men. The *after nine* concept is thought to refer to the nine o'clock at night when it is dark and these men are finally having an opportunity to go out with other men.

Grace was upset and she did not want to stay in the function. She the left and waited for us in the car. Some few days later after the event, Grace told me that she felt defiled by attending the event. She therefore, requested not to be invited to similar events again.

On the other side, John was not worried about the event. He was happy to have been exposed to the event. Furthermore, he maintained that whatever the LGBTI did with their lives did not worry him. I found the event interesting. Similar to John, I did not see any harm that the LGBTI were doing to the society. During the function I spoke to few individuals and asked them about their experiences of heteronormativity in Polokwane. Their responses showed that the community was still conservative about homosexuality. They also mentioned that the black Pentecostal Christians were also supporting the discriminative attitudes of the society.

One attendee said that she wished the black Pentecostal Christians were taking her side. She further claimed that she was a Christian herself, however, she did not find it necessary to attend any black Pentecostal Christian congregating. Again, here I still see mission as allowing the sexual minorities to use their own frame of reference in understanding the mission of God on earth. I deliberately attended this function as way of showing that I take side with the sexual minorities. Mission cannot be presented aloof, there is a need to engage and encounter with the people in the community.

### **2.3.10. The Limpopo 2016 and 2017 annual gay pride**

About fifty people attended the fifth annual gay pride on Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2016. On the day of the pride the marchers started at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC Park in Polokwane. They then marched through the city streets to the cricket club for the main event. The marchers were carrying colourful flags and placards with messages of appeal to the society to stop the killings and abuse of the LGBTI community. From the beginning of the march I walked along with the group of spectators. My aim of joining the spectators was to observe and listen closely to the opinion of the community member and how they reacted to the event. I observed and

discovered some mixed reactions from the spectators. Paradoxically, others followed the marchers although they said they were disgusted by the event. On the other hand, others showed their support for the LGBTI. Here, again it was the person centred approach that compelled me to attend the pride. My view is that Christians cannot stand at a distance and expect the sexual minorities to come to them. The black Pentecostal Christians need to go out of its confines and identify with the struggles of the sexual minorities.

Again there was another pride in 2017, Although, I did not attend this one, I still got the details about it from one participant. The 2017 gay pride also called upon the community members to stop the killings and the abuse of the LGBTI community. Unlike the other years, this one was held in Seshego Township. The place is few kilometres from the Polokwane. The choice of the venue was motivated by desire to reach out to community in order to make them aware about the existence and realities of the LGBTI. The community was therefore, urged to accept the LGBTI and start treating them as fellow human beings (Mamabaonline.com:2017). The picture below depicts the 2017 Pride in Seshego Township.



**Figure 8: *The 2017 Polokwane Gay pride in Seshego Township Polokwane 30th of May 2017* Source: (Benade (2017)**

## **2.4 Mission with the sexual minorities in Polokwane**

The CWC coined the motto that says “Room enough for all”<sup>46</sup>. I had to make systematic observations of the mission praxis of the CWC even though I was a member of the same black Pentecostal Christians. Amongst some of the activities that I observed was the community outreach program. From my observations I noticed that the black Pentecostal Christians were active in addressing other social issues through its community outreach program. However, issues regarding heteronormativity were not part of the program. The programs that were offered by the black Pentecostal Christians to its members were exclusively heterosexual oriented. I also observed similar situations with the other black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. Their youth programs, the Sunday worship service, the men’s fellowship, the women’s fellowship and the couples meeting only focus on issues related to heterosexual Christians. I therefore, concluded that this exclusive nature of the black Pentecostal Christian’s program were fundamentally heteronormative.

There were Christians who did not conform to heterosexuality yet they wanted to remain members off the black Pentecostal Christians. Again, the parents who has children who are not heterosexual were not supported by the black Pentecostal Christians programs. Some members of the black Pentecostal Christian congregations did not know how to minister to the LGBTI community. Also those people within the community however, not conforming to the heterosexual practice did not find the black Pentecostal Christians welcoming to their sexualities. There is therefore, a need for a mission praxis which will deliberately take the experiences of the sexual minorities as a point of departure in understanding the mission of God.

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<sup>46</sup> Amongst other things when the motto of “room enough for all” was coined it was in order to explain that our congregation is open for everyone. Because of the motto, the welcoming of visitors and hospitality is always emphasised.

The envisaged mission praxis can enable the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane to easily identify with the struggles of the sexual minorities. However, rather than moving from the premise of mission for, it should be a mission with the sexual minorities. In this regard the sexual minorities becomes the custodian of their own spirituality. They will then be given a space to walk together with the black Pentecostal Christians in understanding their faith in God. Since this finding were only part of the person centred identification process, the next chapter will consequently, provide the findings from the systematic study. The study was done in order to ascertain the observation made during this stage of my journey. The findings will then provide a way forward in charting a contour for the envisaged mission.

## **2.5 The systematic study about the position of heteronormativity in Polokwane**

My personal background together with stories I often heard in Polokwane led me to conduct a systematic study. This was done in order to seek a possibility for transforming our current black Pentecostal mission praxis, which still embraced some elements of heteronormativity. Interviews, focus group interviews and participant observation were cautiously made in order to verify the assumptions made during the person cantered identification process. The findings of the process are then presented in details in the following chapter.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The core of this chapter was to present a narrative of my person cantered identification process. The hegemonic position of heteronormativity and its impact in the lives of the sexual minorities and the mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christian were also delineated. I used as a point of departure the story of my journey, my autobiography and the stories of the sexual minorities in Polokwane to show the need for transformation. I then showed favour of for the use of the story telling approach that supports the listening of other people stories first in order to tell ours. This was done in order to locate my background in the realities of the sexual minorities happening in Polokwane and also in the mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians thereof. Although all these stories presented here formed part of the research findings, they

were fundamentally not part of the formal research data collection processes. Although data was collected during this stage of insertion the findings of the study are presented in the next chapter in a systematic manner.



## CHAPTER 3

### The research findings

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the detailed and systematic research findings. The data was collected during the course of my person centred identification process as presented in chapter 2 of this study. It also utilised the dimension of contextual scrutiny from the adapted matrix praxis<sup>47</sup>. The context that was scrutinized was formed by the realities of the sexual minorities within the black Pentecostal Christian circles in Polokwane. Conversely, the data collected within and about that context was then systematically and intensely scrutinised. As a result the findings made during that process are presented in this chapter. In the preceding chapter, I used my story to presents the glimpse of my insertion into the same context. However, in this chapter, I present the formal findings thereof.

Accordingly, I used the summarised interview questions to guide the process of presenting the findings. The implication therefore, is that the presented findings here came as the results of the individual and focus group interviews and also those obtained during the process of my participant observations. As part of interpreting the data, I endeavoured to respond to the second sub-question of this study as reflected in (section 1.3.1). In retrospect, the sub-question sought to unearth the underlying issues influencing the hegemonic position of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian's circles in Polokwane. The whole process was motivated accordingly by the call to ascertain what is happening in the research settings as (Kritzinger 2011:51 argued. The process in a way contributed in revealing the good and the bad that happen as part of the experiences of the sexual minorities in Polokwane.

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<sup>47</sup> The adaptation of the praxis matrix was discussed in section 1.71 of this study

The overall task of presenting the findings at this point followed the process of dividing aggregated texts (oral, written and visual) into smaller segments of meaning for close consideration, reflection and interpretation as Denzin and Lincoln (2013:414) maintained. I therefore, used the field notes and digital recording to ascertain that all the relevant data is captured and divided accordingly. Moreover, through the summarised interview questions the common themes and subthemes emerged. The same were then used in the subsequent chapter for the purpose of theological reflections. In the next section, I am continuing with the process by presenting the summary of the interview questions.

### **3.2 The Summary of the interview questions**

At this juncture I point toward the dominant inquiries that guided the entire data collection process. However, bearing in mind that the interviews were predominately semi structured, I would often ask some follow-up questions. The motivating factor was to get an in-depth insight regarding certain issues emanating from the responses. The follow-ups again happened when new themes that needed clarity emerged during the interviews. The initiating question focused on the views of the participants regarding heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian's circles in Polokwane. The purpose of asking that particular question was precisely to determine how the participants well thought-out the hegemonic position of heteronormativity in the context of the black Pentecostal Christian faith and practice.

The second question was aimed at discerning the experiences of the participants in regard to heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christianity. In responding to this question, the participants used either their own personal experiences or their knowledge about the experiences of others whom they knew have experienced the same predicament within a black Pentecostal Christian settings. As a results, participants narrated their own stories, some pointed to the realities they observed within their immediate environments.

The third question on the other hand, aimed at finding out about the position awarded to heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. In presenting their views, the participants assisted by revealing the sources and agents of heteronormativity thriving within these circles. Consequently, their views also unearthed some reasons behind the embracing of this concept by the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. In addition, I was also guided by the same views on where to focus during my formal participant observations. The fourth question again, was about the causes of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. This question aimed at delineating the forces behind the position of this phenomenon in that context. The stories told pointed to aspects and perceptions which helped the phenomenon to thrive in the midst of the black Pentecostal Christian's circles.

Consistently, the fifth question enquired on the perceptions of the black Pentecostal Christians about the sexual minorities in their area. Their responses were critical in pointing the impact of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian's spheres. The sixth question on the other hand sought to finding out the participant's thoughts regarding the position of God on heteronormativity. Since this study was conducted within the field of Missiology, it was therefore, important to find out the perceptions about God in relation to this phenomenon. Different responses showed that participants had different perceptions on how God viewed heteronormativity. These perceptions also shaped their understanding of what a relevant mission praxis in that context entails should.

Then, the seventh question was about what needed to be done in order to transform the heteronormative elements within the black Pentecostal Christian's circles in Polokwane. This last questions deliberately aimed at finding out what a post-heteronormative Christian praxis within that context was supposed look like. In order to answer the same question, the participants presented practical strategies that were eventually considered in the definition of a relevant mission praxis and what it should entails. In the next section I will turn to the presentation of the findings

### **3.3 The views regarding heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian's circles in Polokwane**

Participants were asked about their views and knowledge of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. In their responses, some participants pointed out that the sexual minorities experienced heteronormativity from the black Pentecostal Christians in a form of marginalisation. These Christians were often portrayed as perpetrators of marginalisation of those who did not subscribe to the heteronormative norms and practices. One participant expressed his experience of being marginalised by the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane because he was bisexual in this manner:

Sometimes I ask myself why I am continuing to attend a black Pentecostal Christian church. Since they knew about my sexuality they restrained me from becoming part of leadership committees. Again, most of the things done within my congregation are irrelevant to me. They often talk about marriages in terms of heterosexual partners, I therefore feel like a stranger in their midst (Power: May 2016)

Additionally, some participants in the course of the Yellows focus groups interviews further indicated that the black Pentecostal Christians were deliberately enforcing compulsory heterosexuality on its members. As a result, those who did not abide by the norm were therefore, side-lined. In pointing this out, participant A4 explained in Tshivenda what his local black Pentecostal pastor said to a teenager who identified as gay that:

*Vhathu vha funanaho nga mbeu nthihi a vhongo tangedzwa kha heyi kereke*  
[Same-sex lovers are not welcomed in this congregation] (A4: March 2016).

He also mentioned that the pastor further, told the teenager that he either stop being gay or leave his congregation. In response, the teenager maintained that he could not change his sexual orientation and as a result, he was then excommunicated from the congregation. The action of the pastor significantly showed that marginalisation of the

sexual minorities was a reality in some black Pentecostal Christian's circles in Polokwane. In addition, other participants also concurred through their responses that the expulsions of same-sex lovers were common in most black Pentecostal congregations in Polokwane. In narrating his personal story, participant B1 said during an interview that he was told to stop playing the keyboard and his membership in the worship team was also suspended. He said that he was given this instruction after an elder in his congregation discovered that he was bisexual.

Moreover, participant B1 was also disgruntled because the decision to terminate his membership in the worship team was made without engaging him first. Also because he was not given an opportunity to tell his side of the story. However, another black Pentecostal pastor argued during the Power focus group interviews that although the sexual minorities were welcomed in the black Pentecostal Christian's congregations, it did not mean that they were also free to express their sexualities publicly. The same pastor maintained that homosexuality should be kept as a private matter, also only because God hated homosexuality but loved the homosexuals. In addition, he maintained that an open admission of the presence of the homosexuals in their congregation could set a negative trend.

Again, participant D5 mentioned that he had a friend who was from a black Pentecostal congregation in Polokwane. His friend told him how other black Pentecostal Christian colleagues discriminated against her at work only because they knew she was lesbian. They avoiding her company from the first day of her arrival at her new job. When she asked her colleagues for their reasons of treating her that way, they told her that she has brought shame upon other women by acting like a man. Therefore, her colleagues often whispered in the corridors that they also did not want her in their congregations. Participant D5 also said that he was also convinced that his black Pentecostal friends only welcomed him because they did not know that he was gay.

The tendencies of silencing of the sexual minorities within the black Pentecostal Christian congregations were also indicated as a problem. Participant C1 pointed out that she was told by some women from a local black Pentecostal congregation near her home that she need to keep her sexuality as a private matter. She further alluded that they often discouraged her from disclosing to other people that she was having a

love affair with another woman. On the other hand, others went further to tell her that her sexuality was a disgrace to her family. There were also some participants from the Yellows focus group who indicated that they were often confronted by some members of the black Pentecostal Christian congregations in Polokwane who told them that they needed deliverance from homosexuality. They also claim that the same was also true with their families. There were also those who claimed that their families discouraged them from reporting cases of sexual abuse to the authorities. This was so because some families were afraid of bad publicity. For these families to have a gay family member going out to the open reporting a rape or case of abuse was embarrassing. Participant C6 on the hand narrated a story where her neighbours disowned their child after he came to the open that he was gay.

Moreover, there were other participants during the Lemon focus group interviews who pointed out that apart from individual families, some community and some members of black Pentecostal congregations were openly silencing the LGBTI. They further showed that in some cases the denial of the existence of the sexual minorities within the black Pentecostal congregations was deliberately used to render the sexual minorities invisible. Their invisibility on the other hand entrenched the silencing of their voices. It was also participant D6 who said during an interview that:

In our village, we are all straight. These kids who are claiming to be gay or lesbians cannot openly say that in our community because they know what the results will be (D6: March 2016)

In saying this, participant D 6 confirmed the silencing of the sexual minorities in her community. The same silencing was also true within the black Pentecostal congregations in her community. Another participant also from the Lemon focus group also supported the notion by saying that:

It only takes punishment to end this thing called homosexuality. Our children are claiming to be gay because of lack of punishment from their parents  
*Batswadi a ba tiiše letsogo tšohle de tlo loka* [parents should be hard on their gay children and everything will be sorted (Lemon: April: 2016).

The prevalence of the silencing tendencies were further indicated to be a common within the black Pentecostal Christian's circles. A participant from the Truth focus group interviews said that:

Homosexuals are not allowed to preach or say anything in our congregation. Homosexuality is sin as clearly stated in Romans chapter 1 that God has given them over to their shameful lusts, No one can claim to be gay and be a Christian at the same time (Truth :April2016)

There were also some participants from the Power focus group and others from the Truth focus group who said they have always wanted to come out of the closet. However, they were afraid of being discriminated against by their congregations. One participant from the Power focus group went further to point out that the black Pentecostal Christians did not want to associate with the LGBTI. On the same note, the other one from the Truth focus group added by saying that:

Silencing within our black Pentecostal Christian congregations is evidenced when we refuse that the LGBTI should participate in church programs and activities (Truth: April 2016)

During the same discussion most participants concurred that the silencing tendency was often directed against the sexual minorities within the black Pentecostal circles. On the other hand others went further to claim that the sexual minorities were not allowed to be their true selves. It also emerged that the stigmatisation of the sexual minorities was also rife in Polokwane.

Some participants indicated that the stigmatisation of the sexual minorities was also common within the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. This was so as one participant mentioned in Xi Tsonga that these congregations were using stigmatisation to enforce what in English can be equated to compulsory heterosexuality. Some participants during the Yellows focus group also indicated that stigma also manifested in black Pentecostal Christian congregations in Polokwane through what they called

the tendency of *placing the sexual minorities in boxes*<sup>48</sup>. Other participants also pointed out that stigma was entrenched by names and labels often used to define the sexual minorities.

The response given by participants A1 demonstrated that black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane further used stigmatisation to humiliate those who did not conform to the heterosexual norm. He further said that even though he was a heterosexual and also a black Pentecostal Christian, he did not support the stigmatisation of the sexual minorities he often witnessed in his congregation and others around. For him, every human being was created in the image of God and no one deserved to be stigmatised. On the other hand, participant C4 pointed out that ignorance regarding homosexuality was another promoter of stigma in the community. She further pointed out that even though she identified as heterosexual, her knowledge about homosexuality has helped her to understand how to relate with those who were not heterosexuals.

On the other hand, participant C1 pointed out that it was the notion of stigma that made Christians within the black Pentecostal congregations in Polokwane to make homosexuality look like a contagious disease. She elaborated this point by saying that:

Some of us are even afraid to come out of the closet because we are afraid of being branded. I am not even comfortable to be called lesbian, I rather remain in the closet (C1 March 2016)

In explaining this matter further, C1 saw the black Pentecostal Christians as having a tendency of over exaggerating the importance of naming and labelling the sexual minorities. She then said that they do this to the point where they even overlook the ill-treatment of the sexual minorities such as murder and rape which they continually face. According to participant C5, the attitude and treatment changes immediately when the black Pentecostal Christians discover your sexual orientations. Participant B6 shared the similar sentiments by claiming that his sexuality made the black

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<sup>48</sup> When asked to clarify their understanding of this term, one participant said putting someone in a box is the same as the tendency of classifying people according to their sexual orientation and gender identities.



Pentecostal Christians in his congregation to start treating him differently. He then emphasised this point further by saying that:

I do not know why we are treated differently when we attend the black Pentecostal Christian services. Being gay or lesbian and at the same time be a black Pentecostal Christian is not easy in Polokwane. Church members look at you as if they are asking themselves about your presence in their midst (B6: April 2016)

It was also during one of the Yellows focus group interviews that some participants were adamant that stigma has forced them to live a lie for the rest of their lives. They said that they do this by pretending to be heterosexual even when they knew that they were not. Participant B3 also explained that it was stigma that has led others to enter into marriages of convenience<sup>49</sup>. According to him, those who resort to such marriages do so in order to fit into the societies' prescriptions of normal lives. He further said that such normal lives often included the expectation for someone to get married to a partner of the opposite sex, have children and raise a monogamous heterosexual family.

### **3.4 Experiences of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian's circles in Polokwane**

Some experiences of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian circles in Polokwane were raised as a common reality. Participant B4 made a reference that she stopped attending a black Pentecostal Christian congregation in Polokwane after she was made to feel like an outsider by members of her congregation. In elaborating further she added in Sepedi that:

*O re o tšhabela kgethologanyo ka gae le ya setšhabeng ka go ya kerekeng ya bazalwane empa wa no hwetšha go swana* (B4: March 2016)

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<sup>49</sup> Those were said to be heterosexual marriages that some gays and lesbians resort in entering into so that people in the society will perceive them to be heterosexuals.

Her argument can be loosely translated in English to mean that when she ran away from discrimination in her community by going to a black Pentecostal Christian congregation, she found that the situation was the same. Her statement therefore, established that discrimination was a challenge for the sexual minorities in the black Pentecostal Christians circles. On the other hand, some participants during the Lemon focus group interviews asserted that most black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane were unapologetically marginalising the sexual minorities. They then pointed out that as much as other sins were frowned upon by these Christians, homosexuality was well thought-out to be a greatest sin. They further pointed out that having that kind of mentality contributed in rendering the black Pentecostal Christians as perpetrators of marginalisation. Participant A3 was adamant when talking about the sexual minorities that they were not welcomed in her congregation. She said in Xitsonga that:

*A va ye e tikerekeni ta ti gay vai sukela tikereke ta hina vazalwana* [Let them go to gay churches and stay away from the black Pentecostal Christians churches] (A3: April 2016)

Participant A3 added that her congregation belonged to the heterosexuals only. Making such a statement that the sexual minorities were not welcomed in her congregation confirmed that the sexual minorities were pushed to the peripheries. Again, participant C4 whose younger brother identified as gay said that her brother has finally stopped attending a black Pentecostal Christian church. The reason that made him to stop was the criticism that he often received from the members of his congregation.

In addition, when responding to the similar question that participant B4 was asked, participant D1 confirmed what was indicated by the former. He said that as someone identifying as MSM, his congregation was marginalising other sexual minorities who were out of the closet. Likewise, his view was that his local black Pentecostal Christian congregation was side-lining the sexual minorities. In further pointing this out, he said that:

Our black Pentecostal Christians services, activities and sermons are presented in a manner that exclusively address the spiritual needs of

heterosexual Christians. You come to our black Pentecostal Christian churches, nothing addresses the gay community. I rather remain in the closet than face the risk of being judged (D1: April 2016)

Again, he talked about issues which bothered him which regard to his sexuality and spirituality. However, he said that his local congregation was not having a platform for him to raise them. He therefore, felt that the black Pentecostal Christianity was not relevant for him. He then said that he was now looking for a church that was going to welcome not on condition that he should change his sexuality. In addition to the views raised by these participant, similar claims were espoused during the focus groups interviews.

In one of the Yellows group interviews, participants concurred that the black Pentecostal were part of those who were marginalising the sexual minorities. There were also consensus amongst the participants that the black Pentecostal Christians only touched the issues related to the sexual minorities when condemning homosexuality in the pulpit. This was done at the expense of neglecting the spiritual needs of the sexual minorities. In their argument about the same issue, some participants from both Power and Truth defended the black Pentecostal Christians by claiming that what they were doing was simply following the prescripts of the Bible. They further demonstrated that the black Pentecostal Christians were only showing the sexual minorities the right way to salvation.

Some participants went further to show that the discrimination of the sexual minorities within the black Pentecostal Christian's circles in Polokwane was a reality. They pointed out that similar to the marginalisation of the sexual minorities in the community, the black Pentecostal black Pentecostal Christians were following the same trend. One participant during the Yellows focus group interviews pointed out that she was told by some black Pentecostal Christians members from her congregation that she was not allowed to join the women fellowship meetings because she was a lesbian. That therefore, made her to feel like an outsiders as compared to other heterosexual women in her congregation. She then mentioned in Tshivenda that:

*na nne ndo sikwa nga tshifanyiso tsha Mudzimu* [I was also created in the image of God] (Yellows: 2016)

Although others were discriminating against her because of her sexual orientation, this participant saw herself as having been created in the image of God. For that reason, she said that she viewed God as welcoming to the sexual minorities. Some participants went further to point out that there were some black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane who used sexual orientations as an indicator of one's acceptability within their congregations. This was evidenced by some participants claiming that the black Pentecostal Christians emphasised the heterosexual- homosexual binary in their congregations. Participant A3 pointed out that:

The black Pentecostal Christians should not be afraid to stand for the truth. In the beginning God created Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve. Therefore, there is no way that homosexuality can be justified within the black Pentecostal Christianity (A3: May 2016)

There were also others who maintained that even though they have not personally experiencing homophobia, they have all the same seen it happening to others who were close to them. They also claimed that they knew some of their LGBTI friends and family members who were raped, battered and killed because of their sexual orientation. The participants during both individual and focus groups interviews presented homophobia within the black Pentecostal Christian's circles as a serious challenge. One participant from Yellows focus group went further and said that:

We are being raped and killed as lesbians, just two weeks ago our friend was raped by a group of men who claimed that they were curing her of homosexuality. (Yellows: April 2016)

Yet again, another participant from the same focus group explained how he was raped by his cousin who was also a member of a black Pentecostal church in Polokwane. The incidence happened after they attended a party of friend, he narrated the story by saying that:

My cousin offered me a place to sleep in Seshego because it was late for me to go back to town. When he said we could share a bed I agreed because I

knew that he was a family member. I felt safe and protected however, in the early hours of the morning he raped me. And thereafter, he told me that what he did was what real men should do. Again, he said if I report the matter no one in the family will believe me because they knew I was gay and he was going to tell them that I asked him to have sex with me (Yellows: April 2016)

These stories told and many others pointed to the existence of homophobia in Polokwane and also amongst the black Pentecostal Christians. Participant B5 went further to show that the sexual minorities in Polokwane are exposed to death and diverse threats because of homophobia. On the other side, B3 emphasised that homophobia in the black Pentecostal Christian's circles in Polokwane was carried out under the guise of protecting African culture, religion, black Pentecostal Christianity, status quo, morality and also the will of God. He said as a way of elaborating his view that the perpetrators hide behind the notions that homosexuality was either imported from Europe or it was simply demonic and un-Christian.

In addition, some participants from the Lemon focus group pointed out that most black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane although they were not in essence homophobic, they were heteronormative oriented. Likewise, from the same focus group, many stories were brought forth by lesbians who said that they were often battered and raped either by a family or community member. Similar to the same realities there were also others who claimed that male to male rape was also common in Polokwane. They then elaborated that both the raping of the lesbians and gays were regarded as *corrective rape*<sup>50</sup>.

Some participants further said that driven by hatred, homophobes believed it was their duty to correct the sexual orientation of those who were deemed to be acting against nature. Participants during the Lemon focus group interviews also mentioned that the LGBTI were often dehumanised and humiliated in Polokwane. For these

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<sup>50</sup> This form of rape happens when homosexuals are raped under the belief that their homosexuality will be corrected from being deviant to be straight.

participants all the ill-treatment was driven by homophobic attitude. In the same way, I also observed that there were those black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane who regarded homophobia as something acceptable.

During my engagement with the sexual minorities the issue of the black Pentecostal Christians as being judgemental came up several times. Participants from the Power focus group interviews constantly referred to homosexuality as a sin against God intended order. On the other side, one participant from the Yellows focus group said:

When we go to the black Pentecostal Christian churches as the LGBTI, we are made to feel that the wrath of God is already upon us. We are constantly reminded that we sinners (Yellows: April 2016)

Participant C2 said she was excommunicated from a black Pentecostal Christian congregation because she was a lesbian. She further said that her congregation did not want to be associated with her anymore after finding out about her sexuality. She therefore, decided to stay at home and pray alone. However, she further pointed out that she regards herself as a Christian even though she was judged by the black Pentecostal Christians.

Again, another participant mentioned that the LGBTI were seen as reserved for the punishment of God. In emphasising this point he said that:

Those who are regarded as straight have to first commit a particular sin such as adultery or fornication before they can be judged by the black Pentecostal Christians. However, being a gay or lesbian one is already judged just for being true to themselves. (Yellows: April 2016)

Amongst others, most participants from the Power ,the Truth and some from the Lemon focus group interviews constantly referred to the Old Testament story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis:19) as a proof of God's judgement against homosexuality.

### **3.5 Heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal congregations in Polokwane**

Based on the observations I made in the CWC, most of the activities and programs were fundamentally heteronormative oriented. I realised after observing the Sunday and weekly services of the CWC that there was no effort made to reach out to those who were not heterosexuals. The programs were designed to respond exclusively to the needs and concerns of those who were heterosexual oriented. In the same way, the Youth, Men and Women fellowship programs covered issues that excluded anyone with other sexual orientations other than heterosexuality.

Again, marriage and relationship programs only covered issues affecting those who are exclusively heterosexual. After attending one of the services I asked some church members why their programs did not address issues related to Christians who might be in a same-sex partnership. The first congregant responded in the following manner:

It should be clear where black Pentecostal Christians stand regarding the issues of same-sex practices. We do not accept the LGBTI in our congregations. If we start compromising the truth in order to please them, it will be the same as encouraging homosexuality which is against the will of God. (April 2016)

Similar to the views espoused by the first congregant, the second one said:

We do not want Christians to promote wrong things, remember that Romans chapter 1 is clear about people who engage in same-sex practices. God hates homosexuality and that cannot be changed by any constitution or any law of the country (April: 2016)

This response projected the hegemonic position of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian's circles in Polokwane. Both the participants used the Biblical passage of scriptures to support that God hated homosexuality. However, it also become apparent from their statements that they were speaking more for themselves than for God. By mentioning the constitution and the laws of the country, the

participants clearly projected the discrimination of the sexual minorities. However, the third congregant presented a different view when she said that:

Even though we may not like the idea, issues of same-sex relationships will haunt the black Pentecostal Christians forever. We have been confronted by many cases of married men who have sex with other men and yet we are afraid to address such topics. It is about time that we accept them as fellow Christians in our congregations (May: 2016)

Again, in another observations that I also made in the CWC, the discrimination of the sexual minorities was evidenced amongst others when a proposal for a guest speaker for a weekend revival in March 2016 was made. The name of one local pastor from another congregation was suggested during the board meeting. However, another board member raised a counter proposal. He cited that there were rumours that the pastor who was suggested to be a guest speaker was gay as a result therefore, that particular pastor was not invited.

Yet again, another participant from Yellows focus group told a story about her experience of discrimination in a black Pentecostal congregation in Polokwane. She made reference to a day when she arrived late at a church service. When she arrived, the pastor was already in the pulpit presenting the sermon. Although the sermon was talking about the love of God for every human being, as a conclusion the pastor invited those who were possessed by what he called the spirit of homosexuality to come to the altar for the prayer of deliverance. As someone who was known in that congregation to be lesbian, the participant said that she felt humiliated by the pastor's invitation. She therefore, decided to stop attending that church.

On the other hand, participant B5 who identified as transgender said that she also had a personal experiences of the hegemonic position of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. She said that one day she attended a church meeting however, she was not allowed to speak after one church member mentioned that only real men and real women were allowed to speak. She further explained that



when she raised her hand in order to give an input, one church member said in Xitsonga:

*Tsamani hansi sesi buti, va te ku vulavula vavanuna na vavasati ntsena hayi lava nga tiviki ku ri va wela kwini* [Sit down sister/ brother, it was said that only men and women are allowed to speak in this meeting not those who do not know where they belong]. (B5:March2016)

She further said that she felt discriminated against when the other attendees just laughed at the comment, and there was no one protected her from what she viewed as a verbal abuse. She also pointed out to another incidence where a black Pentecostal pastor confronted her about her sexuality. On the other hand, participant B4 made further emphasis by saying in Sepedi that:

*Baruti ba bazalwane ba rata go re sokologe re tlogele botabani le ge rena re sa nyaki* [black Pentecostal pastors want us to repent and leave homosexuality even though we do not want to]. (B4: March 2016)

Some participants during the Power focus group concurred that the black Pentecostal Christians were not necessarily discriminating against the sexual minorities. They were only doing what black Pentecostal Christians should do, which is to point a way that leads to salvation. One participant in the same group said:

Gays and lesbians should not try to change what the black Pentecostal Christians stands for, they should just accept that homosexuality is unchristian, un-African and unnatural (March 2016)

In making further emphasis, participant D5 pointed out that he decided to leave his black Pentecostal Christian congregation because of their tendencies of desiring to convert his sexuality. He maintained that he was confronted several times by the pastor and other church members who wanted to pray for him. He further said that they often told him that God wanted to heal him from his gay tendencies however, he then said in Xitsonga that:

*Ku va gay a swivuli kuri na vabya, se a ni twisisi kuri kikwalaho ka yini va lava kuni khongelela* [Being gay doesn't mean that I am sick, therefore, I do not understand why they want to pray for me] ( D5:April 2016)

Furthermore, he also indicated that being told that he needed healing for his sexuality was for him the same as discrimination. His statement shows that the participant was frustrated because of the treatment he received from his congregation. On the other hand, participant D5 said that he lost some friends who were attending black Pentecostal Christian churches after they discovered that he was gay. They decided to end their friendship once they discovered about his sexuality. In another case, participant B5 said her friend decided to move abroad after his parents who were black Pentecostal Christians disowned him after discovering that he was bisexual. According to B5 they made him choose between being a member of the family and his relationship with his boyfriend. Moreover, participant C3 said he had a personal experience of heteronormativity from his own black Pentecostal Christian mother. After telling her about his sexuality, she responded by saying that:

Your father must be turning in his grave after what you told me. This conversation ends here and I do not want to hear it again as long as I live. (C3: April: 2016)

Accordingly, participant C3 said that people did not understand the frustrations of those who do not conform to heterosexuality. He further said that being a bisexual was not a matter of choice however, it was an orientation. If he had a choice, he would have definitely not chosen a sexual orientation that has such a negative implication on his entire life. Another participant during the Yellows focus group shared a similar sentiments and asserted that:

Same-sex relationships were more complicated than people often think. Being in a relationship with another man does not mean that I do not love my spouse and family, I do love them however this type of relationships provides me with fulfilment they cannot provide. Unfortunately some of us we end up getting married to women so that we can fit into the society's expectations. If I had been given a chance to decide for myself, I would have been married to another man. (Yellows March: 2016)

Participants C4, C5 and C6 showed the position of heteronormativity when they claimed that the sexual minorities were emulating their sexuality from white people. As far as they were concerned homosexuality was a European concept that never existed in Africa before the coming of the Europeans. So, some participants from the Lemon focus group also stressed that Africans who claim to be gay or lesbians have lost their original African identity. Some of the participants went further to blame the democratic dispensation in South Africa for the increased numbers of those who were going out of the closet. Their view was that democracy allowed wrong things to thrive in the society. Again, for them, the same democracy was also destroying the African culture when it promotes homosexuality in the society.

The stereotyping of the sexual minorities was also perceived by some participants as another common contributor to the hegemonic position of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. Participant C2 understood stereotyping as a concept that promotes the generalising of the sexual minority's lives. One participant during the Power focus group displayed stereotyping when declaring that the LGBTI were inherently promiscuous. On the other hand, participant A2 said that the idea of monogamous relationships in same-sex relationship was not possible. He further pointed out in Sepedi that gay people:

*A ba gone go dula ba sa diri thobalano, ba fela ba utsoelwana balekani.* [They cannot live without having sex, they often steal each other's partners] (A2: April 2016)

Again during the Truth, the Power and Lemon focus groups, participants often used a generalised view when referring to the sexual minorities. According to participant A5, the LGBTI were attending black Pentecostal Christian's churches to seduce their spouses. She further said that she could not allow her spouse to be a friend of someone who had homosexual tendencies. This notion was further pointed out by other participants who said that the LGBTI were seductive by nature. One participant further asserted that gays and lesbians were capable of transforming heterosexuals into homosexuality. Still presenting the similar views, were some participants during

the Lemon focus group who maintained that all gays and lesbians were flamboyant and had lot of money. Such lifestyle made them to think homosexuality was going to be accepted by the society. All these stories pointed out that heteronormativity was afforded an unquestionable position within the black Pentecostal Christian circles in Polokwane.

### **3.6 The causes of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane**

Amongst the contributing factors pointed out by the participants as causes of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane, religion was also cited as one of them. Participant D3 indicated that it was common amongst the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane to support heteronormative structures using religion as their base for their actions. Another participant during Lemon focus group interview who also identified as lesbian was adamant that religion was used wrongly in this regard. She said in Sepedi that:

*Batho ba fela ba khuta ka borapedi ge be nyaka go re tshwenya* [People often hide behind religion when they want to trouble us] (S3: March 2016)

Another participant added also in Sepedi by saying that:

*Go ya makatša gore modimo a ka re bopa a fetsa a re hloya* [It is doesn't make sense that God can create us and thereafter hates us] (Yellows: march 2016)

Moreover, participants during Yellows focus group further indicated that using religion in this manner was to misuse it. They concurred that the God of love wouldn't be pleased with the abuse of the sexual minorities. Other participants from the Yellows focus group also mentioned that the black Pentecostal Christianity was guilty of perpetrating heteronormativity in the society. However, another participant from the truth focus group disputed the claim that black Pentecostal Christians were promoting heteronormativity in the society. They further showed that black Pentecostal Christians were fundamentally against any form of oppression in the society.

For this participant, black Pentecostal Christians embraced homosexuals but not homosexuality. In supporting this view, participant A6 gave an example of someone who was welcomed in her congregation even though he was openly gay. Some participants concurred with A6 by further elaborating that they knew in their congregations some who were in the same-sex relationships yet they continued to attend church.

On the other hand, other participants pointed out that in most cases the black Pentecostal Christians were silent about issues of homosexuality. On the contrary, participant D1 emphasised that the black Pentecostal Christians were more vocal and anti-homosexual. Again, others during the Lemon and Yellows focus groups interviews pointed out the silences of the black Pentecostal Christians whilst homophobia was thriving in the Polokwane community. By failing to openly challenge homophobia, black Pentecostal Christians were depicted by participant D3 as equally to be blamed for the problems caused by homophobia in the lives of the sexual minorities in Polokwane.

On the other hand, Participant C2 brought the issue of black Pentecostal Christian's denial of the existence of the sexual minorities in their circles as another way of promoting heteronormativity. In elaborating further, she said that in most cases black Pentecostal Christians claimed that the sexual minorities were non-existent within their circles. However, she further stated that homosexuality existed everywhere in the society as well as within the black Pentecostal Christians congregations. The denial of the existence of the sexual minorities according participant D3 constituted the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane to be heteronormative. It was again the same participant who further said in Xitsonga that:

*Vazalwane va ta ku endla u ti twa loko u ri gay o nge a wu fanelanga ku hanya la misaveni. Kasi na ti gay xikwembu.xa ti rhandza* [Black Pentecostal Christians can make you to feel that being gay you are not worth of living in this world. However, God also loves those who are gay (D3 April: 2016)]

Nevertheless, some participants in the Lemon focus group interviews argued that the black Pentecostal Christians were not heteronormative. All they were doing was simply to be good custodians of the Christian faith. I then decided to visit some black Pentecostal congregations in Polokwane in order to observe and establish their position about heteronormativity. The visits were solely for conducting observations in order to establish whether the black Pentecostal Christians were heteronormative or not. When visiting these black Pentecostal Christian congregations, I always invited some of my friends who were either gay or lesbian and were also out<sup>51</sup> to accompany me.

The main focus of my observations were to discern the reactions and comments of the congregants when seeing a black Pentecostal pastor being friends with someone identifying as gay or lesbian. I also focused on the congregants' interactions with my friends in order to observe whether they were welcomed or not. These were some of the observations that I made during my visits:

I visited the first congregation with Thatho, Thabang and Matume<sup>52</sup>. However, according to my observations the reaction of the black Pentecostal Christians members towards my friends were judgemental. This was manifested amongst others when during the service Thatho decided to sit next to a male congregant. In his reaction, the man took his Bible and moved to another row that was far from Thatho. Again, when the pastor welcome the congregation, he asked the congregants to shake hands and hug those seated next to them. I observed that some congregants were not free to hug my gay and lesbian friends.

In the second congregation that we visited, I also observed similar reactions from the congregants. Similar to the first congregation, the congregants were not friendly to my gay friends. One congregant even asked me what gays were doing in the Christian

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<sup>51</sup> The term out is used to refer to the LGBTI who have come to terms with their sexuality and in most cases have disclosed to someone.

<sup>52</sup> The names used here are not the participant's real names, I had to use pseudonyms in order to hide the identity of the participants.

church. In addition, I also observed that the sermon also had an anti-gay connotations. In his sermon the pastor often mentioned that God wanted to deliver even those who were bound by the spirit of homosexuality. After the church service I then asked the pastor about his views regarding homosexuality and in his response the pastor said:

I understand that God loved the LGBTI however, God hated homosexuality. As far as I am concerned, the LGBTI are welcomed in my congregation however, they must be willing to repent, be prayed for and be delivered from *the spirit of homosexuality*<sup>53</sup>. (June 2016)

Again, we went further and visited the third congregation. In this case only the pastor showed a welcoming attitude towards my gay friends. Most of the congregants reacted in a similar way as that of the first two congregations. After the service, Matume approached one young man and asked him about the schedule for the youth services. Later Matume narrated that the young man was friendly that he even invited him to join them in the youth service on Saturdays in the afternoon. However, an elderly member in the congregation interjected whilst they were still talking. He subsequently told Matome that he should not come to the youth service. He asserted that the service was not for gays.

Some participants pointed out that they observed some cultural practices in the black Pentecostal congregations in Polokwane which they viewed as promoting heteronormativity. Participant C3 mentioned that the cultural practice of marriage that excluded the possibilities of same-sex marriages was one of them. In addition, some participants during the Yellows focus group interviews maintained that the *lebollo* [traditional circumcision] was also contributing to the heteronormative tendencies in Polokwane. Participant B3 elaborated on this point further by saying that:

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<sup>53</sup> Similar to other black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane who associated either being gay or lesbian with being possessed by a spirit or spirit. The pastor included all the categories of the sexual minorities by using the term “Spirit of homosexuality”

*Ko thabeng ba ruta taba tša go amana le monna le mosadi fela, ba bangwe a ba boleli ka bona.* [In the mountain school they only teach about issues related to men and women, they do not talk about the others] (B3 April 2016)

There were also consensus amongst the participants in both the focus groups and interviews that even those within the black Pentecostal Christian's circles in Polokwane often appealed to culture when making arguments against homosexuality. One participant said during the Power focus group that homosexuality was against *setšo sa maAfrica* [African culture]. In line with the same argument, participant A3 said in Xitsonga that:

*Hi xintu xa hina Matsonga a swi endliwi leswaku wanuna a etlela na wanuna unwana* [It is against the Tsonga culture for a man to have sex with another man] (Lemon:May 2016)

Still, participant A4 espoused the similar view and then said in Sepedi that:

*ke bohloa go re monna a ratane le monna yo mongwe* [ It is a taboo for a man to be in love with another man] (A4:May 2016)

Moreover, I also observed when discussing sexuality issues with some members of the CWC that others were not even comfortable to talk about homosexuality. When I asked them for the reasons they were not free to talk about the issue, some pointed out that the subject of homosexuality was embarrassing to them as Christians. There were also others who maintained that it was taboo to talk about such issues in public.

Participant B5, indicated that the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane were exacerbating heteronormativity. She said because she thought that they were ignorant about the subject. She further said that as she identified as transgendered, she experienced heteronormativity differently from the other sexual minorities groups. She realised that the black Pentecostal Christians often fail to distinguish between the sexual orientation and sexual preference (B5: May 2016)



In addition, during the Lemon focus group interviews, one participant made reference that ignorance in the society made people to innocently ostracise the sexual minorities. She continued to say that people often did this because for them only heterosexuality existed, homosexuality was just a myth. A participant during the Lemon focus group interviews said that:

People cannot be blamed if they do not support that which is unnatural, homosexuals do not have a space in the community. We actually do not need them (Lemon: April 2016)

The same lack of knowledge about heteronormativity was also displayed amongst some Christians within the black Pentecostal Christian congregations. When asked about their understanding of the concept, some Christians said they thought it was the will of God to fight against homosexuality. Also during the Power focus group interviews one participant pointed out that homosexuality was simply a matter of choice, it was a sin against God and homosexuals deserved to be punished. Furthermore, this participant pointed out that the black Pentecostal Christians that stands for holiness cannot accept homosexuals in their congregations.

Participant A2 said that as a black Pentecostal Christian he understood homosexuality as unnatural and same-sex practices as something not to be discussed at all. He then argued that:

Homosexuality is unnatural, when a child is born it is either it is a boy or a girl. Therefore, why should homosexuals complain that they are not accepted in our black Pentecostal Christians (A2:May2016)

This utterances amongst others point to the causes of heteronormativity amongst the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. This will therefore, lead to the discussion about the perceptions of the black Pentecostal Christians regarding the sexual minorities in Polokwane.

### **3.7 The perceptions about the sexual minorities in Polokwane**

Some participants pointed out that the miseries and the ill-treatment they suffered were exacerbated though not exclusively by the perceptions of the black Pentecostal about the sexual minorities. Participant A1 mentioned that homosexuality was a sin before God therefore, homosexuals were sinners who needed to repent. Also some pastors during the Power focus group interviews were adamant about the same view. One pastor mentioned that:

The problem with those promoting homosexuality is the lack of understanding of the Bible. Homosexuals cannot see the kingdom of God. The more this truth is emphasised the homosexuals will see the need to repent (Power: April 2017)

Those holding this view often mentioned the need for the sexual minorities to accept the Lord Jesus in order to be delivered from homosexuality. On the other hand B6 indicated that the black Pentecostal Christians did not expect a homosexual person to be a true Christian. It was the same during the Lemon focus group interviews, some participants maintained that homosexual people were not needed in the community. He further maintained that the sexual minorities were causing misfortunes in the community. Again, in support of this notion, participant A6 stressed that the misfortunes in the community were the results of homosexuality. She then stressed that God cannot leave any sin go unpunished however, she also indicated that the problem was that the misfortunes caused by homosexuality affected the whole community.

There were also others from the Power focus group interviews who maintained that homosexuals were disobeying the law of God. Again, for these participants there was punishment awaiting those who were practicing homosexuality. The main argument against homosexuality and homosexuals were based on their un-Christian debates. Most participants were adamant that God did not create the sexual minorities. They perceived homosexuality as the work of the devil who was distorting the original plan of God, of the complementarity between a man and a woman.

Some participants during the Truth and the Power focus groups maintained that nothing good could come from someone homosexuals. For these participants, the sexual minorities were inherently bad. Participant A4 further pointed out that homosexuality can be equated to the worship of the devil. He said that because for him it did not make sense that those who worship God can again be homosexuals.

### **3.8 The position of God regarding heteronormativity**

Most participants pointed out that God made a clear distinction between a homosexual as a person and homosexuality as an act. Those holding this view maintained that as much God loved the homosexuals, God was against the act of homosexuality. Some participants went further to use the creation story in the Biblical book of Genesis chapter 1 to demonstrate that God's initial plan was to create a man and woman not a man and man. These scripture was therefore used to discredit homosexuality.

Again, some participants made an emphasis that God did not approve same-sex relationships and practices. Participant A4 pointed out that:

God commanded us to multiply and fill the earth, how then can homosexuals multiply? It is clear that homosexuality was not part of God's initial plan of procreation (A4 May 2016)

Some participants added that God did not create homosexuality however, it was the work of the devil. Participant C4 said as much as she did not hate homosexuals. She believed that God created a man and woman and that was the divine order. She therefore added that, homosexuality was against nature. During the Power focus group, some participants were adamant that when a gay or lesbian becomes a child of God, their sexual orientations is transformed and they become heterosexuals. They claimed that this happened as result that God was exclusively a God of the heterosexuals. Again, participant A2 pointed out that homosexuals were outcasts in the family of God. In addition to this view, some participants from the Truth and Power

focus groups were adamant that it was better for the LGBTI to start their own churches where they can worship God without the desire to be welcomed by others.

One black Pentecostal pastor pointed out during one of the Power focus group interviews that the only way sexual minorities could be welcomed in the black Pentecostal Christian congregations, is when they are willing leave homosexuality and become heterosexuals. Some participants supported the pastor's view and indicated that there was no need to compromise the truth. One participant further pointed out that God could not listen to prayers of a homosexual person because what they were doing was simply rebellion against God's divine order.

Contrary to this view, some participants from individual interviews, Yellows, Lemon and few from Power and Truth focus groups were not in agreement with that view. Their responses fundamentally separated what they understood as the will of God and the perceptions of the black Pentecostal Christians about God. Most of the participants indicated that although they viewed the black Pentecostal Christians as being heteronormative, they saw God as undiscriminating. Participant B4 further showed that she cannot stop praying to God on account that she was rejected by her black Pentecostal congregation. She then maintained that even though her congregation did not accept her, she was fully aware that God did not reject her.

Some participants from the Lemon focus group showed that God was a God of love, therefore, heteronormativity was not part of God's nature. Other participants from Yellows supported this notion by showing that God accepted every human being irrespective of their sexual orientations. A Participant from Lemon said that:

I have seen God blessing me in my life. I have good health and have been the best employee of the year at my workplace although I am gay. (Lemon: May2016)

Another participant added by saying in Xitsonga that:

*Xikwembu a xi hlawuli munhu, loko ho swi langutisisa xi katekisa ni lava tekiwaka onge i vadyohi* [God does not discriminate against any person, if we

take a closer look, then we realise that God also blesses those who are perceived to be sinners] (Lemon: April 2016)

Again, Participant C5 said God was not concerned about him being MSM or not, on the contrary God saw him as a human being. On the other hand, in her response when I asked her about how she thought God viewed heteronormativity, participant B5 said that she believed that God was on the side of the sexual minorities. She indicated that the outcasts were always welcomed by God. Additionally, participant C5 also pointed out that the love of God was directed towards every human being. He then stressed that there was no need to doubt that God was indiscriminating in nature.

On the other hand however, others pointed out that they were not sure about the position of God regarding heteronormativity. Some of those who held this view would often point out that no one can speak on behalf of God. There were also others who maintained that it was not important for them to know which side God was taking. What made them happy was to be alive and embracing every human being. The most common responses from the Lemon focus group were that God did not take side. Those who believed that God was against homosexuality and those who believed that God was in favour of the homosexuals were both doing so for their own convictions. God was only concerned about saving the world.

### **3.9 What needed to be done regarding heteronormativity in Polokwane?**

Participant B6 pointed out to the need for the transformation of the manner in which the sexual minorities are perceived and treated within the black Pentecostal Christian circles. Other participants from the focus groups also supported the notion by pointing out that there was also a need to understand the love of God that was meant for everyone irrespective of their sexual orientations. When such love is understood, some participants maintained that it will be easy for the black Pentecostal Christian to also love everyone. Some participants in the Power focus group also maintained that the black Pentecostal Christians needed to be open and start discussing the topic of heteronormativity openly. One participant from the same group pointed out that

currently the topic is treated as a taboo. She therefore, said that there was a need to move away from such treatment.

### 3.10 The summary of the research findings

The participants in both the individual and focus group interviews raised pertinent issues which showed that the hegemonic position of heteronormativity was a serious concern in Polokwane. The same issues were also confirmed by the participant observations I made during my insertion in the very same context. The research findings pointed to the need for transforming of the current mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. The table below outlines the themes and sub-themes delineated from the questions asked and the responses given during the individual and focus groups interviews. The whole process was guided by the summarised seven interview questions presented in this study.

Themes and sub-themes emerging from the research findings	
Themes	Sub-themes
1. The cases of heteronormativity in Polokwane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The marginalisation and discrimination of the sexual minorities in Polokwane</li> <li>▪ The silencing and stigmatisation of the sexual minorities</li> <li>▪ The stereotyping of the sexual minorities</li> <li>▪ The homophobic and judgemental attitude in Polokwane</li> </ul>
2. The causes of heteronormativity in Polokwane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The contribution of religion</li> <li>▪ The traces of heteronormativity in cultural practices</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ignorance about heteronormativity</li> </ul>
3. God's mission and heteronormativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ God loves the homosexuals but hates homosexuality</li> <li>▪ God was not interested on a person's sexuality</li> </ul>

**Table 4 Themes and Sub-themes emerging from the research findings**

### **3.11 The significance of the research findings**

Most of the participants concurred that heteronormativity was a challenge within the black Pentecostal Christian circles in Polokwane. The marginalisation, discrimination, silencing, stigmatisation, stereotyping and homophobia were pointed out as elements supporting heteronormativity to thrive within that context. Additionally, amongst the causes of this phenomenon, participants indicated that religion, cultural practices and lack of knowledge about the subject were contributing factors. Taking into consideration the cases and the causes of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane therefore, led to the move of seeking to understand how the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane needed to understand the mission of God to the sexual minorities.

### **3.12 Conclusion**

The prevalence of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian circles in Polokwane emerged several times during the responses given to the interviews questions. Moreover, through intense observations some of its elements were then detected in the interactions between the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities. It emerged that marginalisation, discrimination and the silencing of the sexual minorities were issues of concern especially from the LGBTI community. Several incidences where the three issues manifested within the black Pentecostal Christian circles were brought forth by the participants.

The participants further pointed out some causes which they saw as contributing to the hegemonic position of heteronormativity in Polokwane. From their responses the need to transform the use of religion and culture within the black Pentecostal Christian circles was pointed out. They also presented different views about their understanding on how the mission of God was supposed to be. It was then established that there was a common understanding between the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane that God loved the homosexual as a person but did not love homosexuality. On the other hand, within the sexual minorities and some members of the community the understanding was that God was indiscriminating, therefore every human being was worthy of the love of God.

These therefore, raised some theological questions which will be the focus of the next chapter. The theological reflections will therefore, seek to delineate a relevant mission praxis which can respond to the hegemonic position of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. The next chapter will therefore presents the theological reflections on the research findings.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Heteronormativity in the light of theology**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The hegemonic position of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christian's circles in Polokwane is not only a social problem, however, it also has a theological and Missiological implications. The research findings in the previous chapter has indicated a number of cases and causes of this phenomenon in that context (section 1.3.1). I therefore, deduced from the same research findings that heteronormativity has perpetuated the wrong perceptions amongst the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane about the sexual minorities.

Amongst, these perceptions was the view that the sexual minorities were intrinsically bad and sinners therefore, needed to be corrected and converted to heterosexuality. Consequently, the same thought is often regarded as God's divine order. As a result, an assumptions that nothing good was to be found in the lives of the sexual minorities prevailed. Moreover, heteronormativity went further to aggravate the discrimination, marginalisation and the pushing of the sexual minorities to the peripheries. There was for that reason, a need to appeal to theology in order to address the challenge.

##### **4.1.1 Appealing to Black Liberation theologies**

I have indicated in chapter 2 of this study that my background was formed by the black Pentecostal Christian circles. The same background was further strengthen when I became a pastor in the same Christian traditional setup. However, in doing theological reflections in this chapter I did not move from the premise of the black Pentecostal Christian Theology<sup>54</sup>. On the contrary, from my studies within the theological sub-field of Missiology, I adopted some perspectives of the Black Liberation Theologies. I

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<sup>54</sup> The black Pentecostal Christian Theology refers to the theological doctrines which the black Pentecostal Christians base their faith in

regarded these type Theologies to be better suited for the topic of this study. I am not oblivious of the fact that although they are sometimes applied in Africa, they have their roots from the Liberation theology that originated in the context of Latin America. Nonetheless, the use of plural rather than singular in reference to this kind of doing theology has presented a means to entreat from its arguments. By manifesting in different forms from different contexts and cultures Liberation theologies in this regard took a form of challenging the black life experiences. Amongst, these experiences, sexuality and homosexuality are also form part of the black life.

I am also aware that African Liberation Theologies that addresses issues of sexuality in particular queer theory are still a much debated issue inside and outside the black Pentecostal Christians and academic circles in the global world (Althaus-Reid 2006:1). Nevertheless, it was its position which challenged oppression and other social ills in the structures of the society that made it viable to be used here in the challenge of heteronormativity. However, Gerald West has bluntly pointed out that the more established forms of African liberation theologies all struggle with intersecting with the queer (West 2016:220).

Again, it is therefore, true as Maduro (2016:28) that Liberation Theologies need to enter into an open, sensitive, respectful, and continuous encounter with the LGBT theologians and their work. That will be in the process a pursuit for a critical analysis of Christian homophobia and heteronormativity from a properly theological perspective. It is therefore, that critical analysis of heteronormativity in Polokwane that paves a way for doing the theological reflections in this chapter. It therefore, means that African liberation theologians have a task of engaging in the LGBTI discourse that is interested in understanding the mission of God.

Following this route however, does not mean that Liberation theologies are superior to the black Pentecostal Christian theologies. Again, it did not mean that I wanted to impose the perspectives of Liberation theologies upon the black Pentecostal theologies. On the contrary, they were used as way of showing that different theologies

can be used within different contexts and different Christian settings. Rather than Liberation theologies be seen as being against the black Pentecostal Christian theologies, the two can be regarded as a process that complements each other when addressing the topics related to the marginalised groups within different communities. Again, it is also true as Otto Maduro pointed out that deviating from the understanding of dominant theologies is often regarded as heretical, mistaken, sinful and even as marginal theologizing (Moduro 2006:20). It might be considered the same with the theological reflection done in order to challenge the hegemonic position of heteronormativity.

That process, inter alia served as a guiding post in the redefinition of the mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians with the sexual minorities in Polokwane. This chapter therefore, presents the theological reflections in the light of the Liberation theologies. It again seeks to respond to the third sub-question presented in chapter 1 of the same study. Consequently, the new understanding of the black Pentecostal Christian faith, practice and the interpretation of the Bible are developed. That happens in order to chart a way forward towards transforming the current mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane, and also presenting the possibility of embracing transformation. It follows then that the encounter between God and the marginalised served as a pointer on how the transformation should occur.

## **4.2 The encounter between God and the marginalised**

The concept of the *transformative encounters*<sup>55</sup> (Kritzinger 2011:52) was adopted here as a point of departure in the presentation of the encounter between God and the marginalised. It is my view that the same encounter also happens between God and the sexual minorities in Polokwane. It happens so because of their position of marginality in the community. I equated the encounter here, to what Kritzinger

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<sup>55</sup> The term transformative encounters have been used by Kritzinger to refer to Mission as praxis which is about concrete transformation. Such transformation further leads to transformative encounters among people, and between the living God and people it further leads to people being called, sent, healed, and empowered (Kritzinger 2011:52)

(2008:770) initially called a face to face meeting which happens during *encouterology*<sup>56</sup>. It is through the face to face encounter that God meets the sexual minorities at the point of their needs, and also at the point of their good works. The same encounter therefore, becomes a model for the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane and others elsewhere. In emulating God, the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane should stand in solidarity with the sexual minorities and their realities. Again, this can be demonstrated by their willingness to have a face to face encounter with them, embracing them as fellow human beings and members of the same family of God.

Additionally, the same encounters are aimed at changing lives and transforming the long held heteronormative attitudes in both the community and the black Pentecostal congregations. Conversely, the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane are understood here as those who are called, sent, and empowered to transform their contexts. God is calling them and sending them at the same time to present liberation of those marginalised.

This line of thinking is based on the ideology that God dictates the content and nature of mission. The black Pentecostal Christians on the hand are only privileged to participate in that mission. All that they are called to do is to discern the mission of God already present in the lives of the sexual minorities. As they continue with the search, they also discover in the process God's redemptive work already at work in the lives of the sexual minorities. It is as Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011:38) pointed out that that the work of the triune God is to call and send the black Pentecostal Christians through the power of the Holy Spirit. Again they are sent into the world to participate fully in God's mission within all creation. Since participation here is with all creation, it is for that reason that the sexual minorities are also included.

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<sup>56</sup> Kritzinger (2008:770) coined the term to refer to the encounter between Christians and people of other religions, however the same notion can be applicable in the context of this study.

Since they are also included therefore, the black Pentecostal Christians are now sent to participate together with the sexual minorities in the mission of God. This on the other hand, develops a creative tension between the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities. As much as the black Pentecostal Christians are willing to obey and emulate God's encounters with the marginalised, there has been a long standing animosity created by the wrong perceptions regarding the sexual minorities. For the encounter to be actualised between the two there will be a need for a conscious and deliberate choice of searching for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities. It then follows that the sexual minorities who are deemed to be the outcasts or better known as the "*the other*" becomes the main focus of the encounter. This therefore has led to the persistent question often asked by the black Pentecostal Christians within this context

#### **4.3 The persistent questions**

The question that was asked by Nathanael long time ago in Biblical times is still audible in the point of encounters between the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in this context. Also, the response given by Philip sets a trend for the need to take an action. Nathanael in the Gospel of John cried out after hearing that the messiah was born in Nazareth and said:

Nazareth! Can anything good come from there? Nathanael asked. "Come and see", said Philip (John 1:46 NIV)

Although sometimes in a subtle manner communities often ask the similar questions in different times and contexts. The concept of goodness is often associated with certain places and certain categories of people in the society. Such a virtue seems to be used to entrench the "*otherness*" of "*the other*". In this way people often ask, "Is there anything good that can come from these particular kind of people? Can anything good come from the sexual minorities? In clarifying the manner in which the question is often directly or indirectly asked, it can be deduced from the research findings that the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane are asking the similar questions in relations to the sexual minorities. It might be said that they are asking if there is

anything good that can come from a gay or lesbian. Can bisexuals and transgendered become real Christians? Is there anything good to be found from intersexed people? Can the WSW and MSM be truly born-again?

These kind of questions continue endlessly in a quest of searching for goodness in the lives of the outcasts. I therefore, refer to them as the Nathanael's inquiry<sup>57</sup>. However, Philip's response is also critical in providing the guiding steps to be followed in redefining the mission praxis within this context. Philip said to Nathanael, "Come and see". Philip showed a need for Nathanael to move from where he was to a point where he could see the messiah that was born in Nazareth. Following the same trend, Mission is therefore, seen here as a call for the black Pentecostal Christians to come and see the good in the lives of the sexual minorities.

Nathanael's inquiry again, moves from a bewilderment point of view. Out of disbelief Sceptics often ask, if anything good can be found in certain categories of people especially those who are looked upon as bad. Additionally, the same inquiry moves from a religious bigotry that sees others as inherently bad. Out of that perception, those who see themselves as being good often doubt if "*the other*" can be good too. With this understanding, God is then viewed and presented as the God of the good who does not embrace "*the other*". Those who claim to be good often question the goodness of others in a sarcastic manner. In contextualising the Nathaniel's inquiry, it can be said that the inquiry is often maintained by the desire to humiliate and discredit those who are deemed to be different.

Amongst other inquiries, others can ask if there is a possibility of a transformative encounter between the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane. They further want to know if the transformative encounter between God and the sexual minorities served as an example of mission for the black Pentecostal

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<sup>57</sup> I coined this concept in order to have a formula in the presentation of view that the black Pentecostal and the community in Polokwane ask question in their search for goodness in the lives of the sexual minorities.

Christians in Polokwane. Again, can the black Pentecostal Christians should deliberately and consciously search for goodness in the lives of the sexual minorities? In the quest of responding to these kind of questions, the theological reflection consciously points to the God who takes the side of the sexual minorities. It did not so because of either the goodness or the badness of homosexuality. Rather, it is the respect of the goodness of every individual person irrespective of their differences that should be taken as a point departure. It is therefore, the willingness of showing mutual respect as Rawls puts it when saying that:

Mutual respect is shown in several ways, in our willingness to see the situation of others from their point of view, from the perspective of their conception of their good (Rawls 1999:297)

It then follows that the black Pentecostal Christians in doing mission should follow the call made by Phillip, “come and see”. This is the way that can help them to understand the point of view of the sexual minorities from a closer rather than a distant position. In taking cognisance of the call, the frame of reference of the sexual minorities becomes a definitive factor of what goodness entails. From their daily interactions with the members of the society, their goodness can be unearthed. Again, out of their goodness, the presence of God can be discovered. However, the good works referred in this regard does not equate to legalistic observation of rules and laws. Again, it does not contradict the Biblical dogma of justification by faith (Romans 5:1)<sup>58</sup>

It is thus, the faith of the sexual minorities that matters. This was also evidenced by the research findings indicating that some of the sexual minorities who were expelled from their black Pentecostal Christian congregations still prayed alone at home. There was a clear distinction made by some participants between discrimination of the black Pentecostal Christians towards the sexual minorities in Polokwane and God’s unconditional love. It is for that reason therefore, that the theological reflection done in this chapter considered the themes and sub-themes emerging from the research

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<sup>58</sup> The Biblical doctrine of justification by faith is based on the letter of the Apostle Paul in the book of Roman 5:1 that states that having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (NSV)

findings. They were all used as pointers that guided the answers to the questions asked.

It was for that same reason again that the cases of heteronormativity in Polokwane that is inclusive of the prevalence of marginalisation, discrimination, silencing, stigmatisation, stereotyping and homophobia shaped the process of theological reflections done here (section 3.5 of this study). In addition, the use of religion, culture and lack of knowledge about heteronormativity was also theologically scrutinised in order to distinguish these concepts from the true intended mission of God.

Subsequently, I therefore, asked what and how the mission of God to the sexual minorities in Polokwane should be? This question has therefore, led to the task of charting a way forward. The same way can point to the relevant mission praxis with the sexual minorities in Polokwane. The answers to the question about the mission of God can be found when searching for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities in Polokwane. Can something good be found in their lives that will reflect the presence of God already at work in them? Again, should the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane follow the rest of the society in embracing heteronormativity? Can they continue to regard the sexual minorities as “*the other*” who does not have anything good to contribute to the mission of God?

A reflection on the Biblical parable of the Good Samaritan served as a point of departure in carrying out the task of responding to these questions. It should however, be born in mind that interpreting the Biblical parables has many dimensions. Ernest van Eck at least presented twelve theses on how the Jesus’s parable’s could be understood and interpreted. He presented them in the following manner: starting with the inability of assuming the authenticity of the parables as we have them in the Synoptic, Jesus telling his parables in the first century Palestine, the elite’s exploitation of the non-elite, avoiding an ethnocentricity reading of the parable, Social–scientific criticism facilitating a culture-sensitive reading of the parable, the non-apocalyptic kingdom of God as the central theme of Jesus’s parables, the interpreter



asking about the message carried by the parables in their rural context, the parable as atypical stories, the parable depicting Jesus as a social prophet, parables as stories about God's kingdom, parables making ethical points and the indeterminacy existing in the reading of the parables (van Eck 2009: 1-12).

It was however for him the pointing back of the parable into the setting of first-century Roman Palestine and employing social-scientific perspectives that was a responsible hermeneutical approach when interpreting the parables of Jesus (:12). The strength of this approach lies behind the fact that it is premised on the dynamic that all ideas, concepts and knowledge are socially determined (:12). That reason amongst others presented the re-reader of the parable of the Good Samaritan narrated in (Luke 10:25-37) an ability to look at the realities of first century Palestine and apply it in the contemporary social settings. In further reflecting on these questions, the Jews' perceptions of the Samaritans during the Biblical times played a pivotal role. It was as according to Bruce W. Longenecker that the word 'Samaritan' be intended and heard as the socio-religious outcast which he was.

Again, the combination of the word Good and Samaritan challenges the world and we therefore, faced with polar reversal (Longenecker 2009:424). I concur with Longenecker here that the parable actually forces the acceptance of the possibility where something good can be found from an unaccepted person. It is the Nathaniel's inquiry nevertheless, that can guide the re-reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan towards the right direction. The direction that pushes desires to search for the good in the lives of others. Yet again, it was also Philips' response that demands for an action. It is for that reason, that it is important to present my understanding of the re-reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan in the context of this study. Nevertheless, before the exercise of re-reading, it is also important for me to present the hermeneutical lenses that I used to carry out the whole exercise.

#### 4.4 The refocused lenses of re-reading the Bible

The analogy of a refocused lens of re-reading the Biblical passage of scriptures was coined in this chapter in order to complement the other several ways of reading, interpreting and understanding the Bible. Different methods of Biblical interpretation continues to be implored in different contexts and times. In their presentation of some Biblical interpretations methods, Hill, Knitter and Madges (2004: 321-334) talked about *Evangelicalism*<sup>59</sup>, *Fundamentalism*<sup>60</sup> and *Critical, contextual interpretation of the Bible*<sup>61</sup>. Whilst closer to the Critical, contextual interpretation of the Bible, the refocused lens moves further. It deliberately shifts the attention from the traditional modes which take the experiences of Christians as a point of departure in Biblical interpretations.

In this case however, the realities of the oppressed, marginalised, downtrodden and particularly the sexual minorities are given a preferential option when reading and interpreting the Bible. Again, since the approach is based on the assumptions of the African liberation theologies, I concur with Gerald West that doing theology with ordinary people is not a methodological option, it is constitutive of every process and products of a prophetic queer theology (West 2016:218). It is therefore, true that the experiences of the sexual minorities should set the tone in the Interpretation of the Bible that seeks to liberate the oppressed.

Furthermore, this mode does not only focus on what is written in the Bible, on the contrary, it uses the same lens to further search for goodness in the lives of the sexual minorities. It responds on the affirmative to the call made by Philip, “Come and see”.

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<sup>59</sup> In their deliberation Hill, Knitter & Madges (2004: 321-322) present Evangelicalism as a belief that the Bible is the reliable, authoritative, and sufficient source of knowledge about God and ourselves.

<sup>60</sup> On the similar note, the fundamentalist defined as the one who approaches the Scripture resting on the unquestioned presupposition that the Bible is God’s direct, divine word to humanity (:331)

<sup>61</sup> Then finally, the Critical, contextual interpretation of the Bible holds that while the Bible reveals fundamental religious and moral truths, without error, its historical and scientific descriptions are not necessarily without error (:334)

The black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane therefore, should move from the confines of their church buildings to a face to face encounter with the sexual minorities within the community. They can make this move in order to search for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities they come into contact with. In this case, therefore, the contact will be made for the sake of liberating the sexual minorities from the oppressive elements in the society, again, it will be made also to liberate the black Pentecostal Christians and the community in Polokwane from the hegemonic position of heteronormativity.

Using the refocused lens when re-reading the parable of the Good Samaritan also meant that the entire context of both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane comes into play. The realities faced by the sexual minorities which often obscured their good works are then scrutinised. Therefore, through these lenses, small things that were previously hidden suddenly come to light. Rather than seeing the sexual minorities as intrinsically sinners, the grace of God points to their good works in the society. Additionally, they are also seen as fellow human beings with the black Pentecostal Christians. The figure below depicts my understanding of looking further than perceptions when searching for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities. The view was adopted from Jesus who looked further at the Samaritan who helped the wounded man, and thereafter declared him to be good.



**Figure9: *Depicts the need for binoculars when doing theological reflections.***  
Clipart source (Istockphoto.com: 2017)

The black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane therefore, need to adopt a metaphor of binoculars in their search for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities. In doing so it can in the process aid them to rediscover the mission of God. In using the same metaphor, the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane will also be applying the

acting on the call made by Philip. The inquiry however, shifts from the negative to the positive. In this case, it is not made in a manner of showing doubt to the sexual minorities however, it is made as an act of inquiring about the presence of God in the good works of the sexual minorities.

The inquiry further shows the importance of considering the dynamics within a specific context before conclusions about the sexual minorities are made. The myriad of issues are then looked into through the refocused lens when seeking to detect their goodness. Whilst I am not oblivious that the refocused lens is not the only possible way of reading and re-reading Biblical parables, this view can present some liberating tools in the face of the realities of heteronormativity as presented in the research findings. The refocused lens again should be a deliberate move, something that black Pentecostal Christians should do without a feeling of being compelled. The next section presents the re-reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan whilst using the refocused lenses.

#### **4.5 The re-reading the parable of the Good Samaritan**

The re-reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan here takes the anthropological elements of the sexual minorities as individual members of the community seriously. In doing so, the theological reflection in this regard sees every person as an entity from which goodness can be discovered. Rather than focusing on the sexual minorities as the collective outcasts, sinners or deviant, the good works in their lives as individual members of the community are searched and highlighted. This is done despite their sexual orientations and gender identities. Again, their faith in God qualifies them to be called children of God therefore, worthy to participate in God's mission.

The re-reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan again points to an urgent need for re-reading of the mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. The black Pentecostal Christians can start searching for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities with an aim of bringing transformation. The transformation should be to their own mission praxis and also to the realities of the sexual minorities. Their

goodness however, should not be understood as only based on their good work. On the contrary it should also be grounded on their faith in God. In that regard therefore, the sexual minorities should first be regarded as fellow human beings and then as fellow Christians together with the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. In treating the sexual minorities in this manner, the black Pentecostal Christians will be challenging the wrong perceptions about the sexual minorities in the community.

#### **4.5.1 God already at work in the lives of the sexual minorities.**

It is also important to first acknowledge that the presence of God is already at work in the lives of the sexual minorities. Taking this understanding into consideration can help in seeing beyond their sexual orientations to seeing the presence of God in their good works. Since it is acceptable that all human beings have flaws and also good attributes, the sexual minorities should then be given the same treatment. It can then be better said that, the black Pentecostal Christians when reaching out to the sexual minorities are attracted by presence God in their lives.

God is made visible in the lives of the sexual minorities through their faith and good works. They should then be treated as members of the same family of God, not as strangers or outsiders. Amongst other things, the visibility will be made true by their good works which they do in the community. Such understanding again, calls for an intense theological reflections. The reflections will then consider the human side of the sexual minorities and further looks at the presence of God in their actions and good works. It is then at this point that the anthropological elements and the person-centred approach should be introduced in the re-reading process

#### **4.5.2 The consideration of the Anthropological aspects**

In seeing individuals as human being the question of what does it mean to be a human being should be answered first? In responding to this question, de Gruchy (1997:252) argued that being human means being who I am, therefore as the gentiles did not have to change and becomes Jews in order to be saved, so the homosexuals do not

have to change and become heterosexuals in order to qualify to be children of God. The new mission sees a person first then the sexual orientation and gender identities does no longer have power to define that particular person.

The parable presented the Good Samaritan did the same by portraying him as *Anthropos*<sup>62</sup> [human being] first. This was the main emphasis that was made before his side of being a Samaritan was even highlighted. Starting with his work and emphasising that he was good was a projection of acknowledging his humanity first. Paul Hiebert long traced the importance of humanness within the field of Missiology. He emphasised that Mission has begun to recognise the human dimensions of people, the fact that they are psychological and sociocultural beings (Hiebert 1978:171).

Since this emphasis was made long before, it is about time that the same truth be applied with regard to the mission praxis with the sexual minorities in the contemporary world. Similar to this understanding is a view that promotes a person first language. Based on this view, everyone is regarded as a human beings first before they can be called anything else. This view however, does not take away the importance of self-identification. The LGBTI remain as they identify themselves, however it is not their sexual orientation that can be used to declare them good or bad. On the other hand, the notion of humanity first is not equated here with silencing.

Hugo& Quero (2016:98) pointed out that labelling is manifested in silencing which in turn it renders people invisible. *Anthropos* on the other hand as is used here only points to the fact that we all human being first, before we can become anything. Additionally, by placing the emphasis on the good works of humanity, all other constructed categories and differences lose their grip in the processes of searching for goodness in the lives of individuals. It is these categories amongst others that emphasises the differences existing between people and therefore, promotes discrimination.

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<sup>62</sup> The term *Anthropos* is a Greek word for human being, and from the same term, Anthropology which is the study of human and human behaviour and societies is derived (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>. accessed 2018-11-24)

In the same way, the label of being called the Good Samaritan paved a way for that justifies the searching for goodness in the lives of the sexual minorities in Polokwane. It then follows that using a person first language the sexual minorities becomes, hard workers, best students, employees of the year, responsible fathers, caring mothers, good sisters and brothers. In the side of the black Pentecostal Christianity, they become anointed preachers, worship team leaders, intercessors, apostles, teachers, and pastors' e.tc.

Emphasising these human attributes should be encouraged more than the act of criticising their sexual orientations and gender identities. The black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane are therefore, faced with the task of searching for positive human attributes in the lives of the sexual minorities within their communities and congregations. After discovering these attributes the black Pentecostal Christians should publicly display them to the entire community. This should happen as a sign of acknowledging the presence of God in the lives of the sexual minorities.

During the Melbourne conference (1980) the preferential option for the poor was put at the centre of missiological reflection. Again, an affirmation was made that solidarity with the poor was a central and crucial priority of Christian's mission (Bosch 1991:435). For that reason, the God who takes the side of the oppressed does the same with the sexual minorities. This was demonstrated when God sent Christ to save all who believe irrespective of their sexual orientations or gender identities. Those who were sinners were then declared saints through their faith in God and were made worthy of the kingdom of God. This happened similar to a Samaritan who at the end was considered to be good. Such a notion of finding the good attributes in those who are regarded to be bad can however, be regarded as ambiguous and paradoxical.

### **4.5.3 The paradox the Good Samaritan**

The title of the parable presented as 'the Good Samaritan' can be arguably considered paradoxical. It might be inconceivable for others to comprehend that someone coming from Samaria during the period when the parable was narrated could be in reality called 'good'. The binaries of good and bad, sacred and secular, right and wrong have been a common denominator between people for ages. In using the Nathanael's inquiry it can therefore be asked: "Samaria! Is there anything good that can be found from a Samaritan?" However, distorted the goodness in the life of this particular Samaritan might have been, the true encounter between God and the outcasts revealed and exposed his goodness.

This truth was demonstrated amongst others by the deliberate choice of referring to this man as a good person. This was done although the Samaritans were perceived to be bad. The goodness that was obscured by his ethnicity as a Samaritan was then revealed when Jesus used his good works found in his humanity. Jesus narrated the parable in the following manner:

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, as a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care for him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, the one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise (Luke 10:25-37, NRSV)



The sexual minorities just like the Good Samaritan carries the burden of being labelled as “*the other*” and therefore, nothing good is often expected to found in their lives. The way the Samaritans were perceived and treated by the Jews of their times can be likened to the relationship between the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane. Similar to the Samaritans, the sexual minorities are pushed to the margins of the society. In essence, both the black Pentecostal Christians and the community wonder if anything good can be found in their lives.

#### **4.5.4 The typology of the Good Samaritan**

The parable of the Good Samaritan can be better understood as a typology when doing theological reflection in this chapter. Understanding this parable in this manner justifies the move of portraying the Good Samaritan as typifying the sexual minorities. Welch (1999:53) well argued the use of the same parable as a typology when saying that:

Because of its complexity the story of the Good Samaritan is better described as an allegory which is a more complicated configuration than a parable. An allegory portrays a larger picture that puts numerous pieces of an intricate structure into place, and also helps to define relationships between various parties or human affairs. Moreover a typology prefigures is a shadow of a deeper reality that stands behind the verbal construct. Typological allegories in the gospel help listeners understand the ultimate truths of life history and reality not only by depicting a set of relationships but also by pointing to a more profound meaning beyond

I concur with Welch that the parable of the Good Samaritan is complex in the manner that it was presented. However, its complexity positions it in a positive manner where different truths can be drawn when a reflecting is done on its nature. Again, by understanding typologies as pointing to more profound meaning, it presented a possibility of attaching many interpretations to the same parable depending from an angle where the interpreter reads the narrative.

Although the Good Samaritan in this parable has been for a long time used to typify Christ and his salvific work (Welch 1999:55, Jorgenson 2008:62), I shifted from that view in my use of the same parable here. Rather than following the common route, I placed the Good Samaritan in a position of typifying the sexual minorities in Polokwane. The rationale for making this move was similar to the Good Samaritan whose goodness was obscured by merely coming from a marginalised community, the sexual minorities in Polokwane are facing stereotypes only because of their sexual orientations and gender identities.

On the other hand, I view the expert of the law as typifying the black Pentecostal Christians and their mission praxis in Polokwane. They take this identity because they allowed in their mission praxis the position of heteronormativity to hinder them from seeing the good in the lives of the sexual minorities. Furthermore, the wounded man typifies the people in the community and the families of the sexual minorities who have been in one way or another have received help from the sexual minorities.

I therefore, concur with Kyle Herron that understanding the parable of the Good Samaritan in theological terms means the willingness to see the image of God in everyone (Herron 2010:103). That means as a result, that the sexual minorities are also included amongst those who are created in the image of God. Nevertheless, in order to see God's image in them, the black Pentecostal Christians should be willing to challenge the long embraced perceptions about the sexual minorities.

Again, they should be willing to trace the presence of God that is manifested in the lives of each person irrespective of their sexual orientations or gender identities. Although societal scripts dictating where and from who to expect goodness continues to gain currency in different communities, black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane are now challenged to rely in the power of the Holy Spirit to help them accept the sexual minorities.

#### **4.5.4.1 An outcast declared to be good**

Again, an expectation upon reading this parable could have been that the priest or the Levite would have been the one who helped the man wounded by robbers. They were the ones who were the custodians of the law and therefore, they knew the importance of being neighbourly. Again, as the presenters of the love of God to the people they were in a better position to demonstrate the same love as compared to a Samaritan. On the contrary, they both passed by without helping the wounded man. It was however, the Samaritan who came closer and assisted him. As a result, the Samaritan was regarded as a true neighbour to the man who was wounded consequently, he also earned the rights to be called good.

It is therefore, as Countryman & Ritley (2001:100) pointed out that those who approach the Scriptures should not expect one common meaning. However, they should expect to be surprised even disorientated by their findings as they continue to read. The disorientation in this parable is caused amongst other things by a Samaritan rather than a Jewish priest or the Levite being called good. Jesus introduced a great shift to the expectations of the expert of the law. He fundamentally taught the expert of the law that in Gods' eyes, not only those who are considered worthy by the society are always worthy of God's declared goodness. This is also reflected in the transformative encounter between God and the outcasts.

#### **4.5.4.2 The transformative encounter between God and the outcasts**

The encounter between God and the sexual minorities in Polokwane can be delineated in the parable when an outcast was referred to as someone who is good. Conversely, this pointed to a God who gives credit to people on account of their faith and good works. The standard measure that God used to call this particular Samaritan 'good', was his action rather than his identity as a Samaritan. The same action that of saving the man who was wounded might not have been recognised by people, but God credited him for it. The encounter here is therefore, manifested the love of God for all human beings irrespective of their sexual orientations or gender identities. The God of love encounters the sexual minorities by focusing on the goodness they possess as

human beings. This understanding can only find acceptance when the move to the understanding of mission as multidimensional in nature is embraced as Bosch (1991:512) cautioned that we need a more radical and comprehensive hermeneutic of mission. That will in the process help in looking at the concept of “mission as” rather than “mission is” (Conride 2011: 84)

In applying the Nathanael’s inquiry, the answer to the question is in the affirmative. There is goodness to be found in the lives of the sexual minorities. The same Jesus who saw goodness in the life of a woman who broke the jar of an expensive perfume, poured it on his head while he was feasting in the house of Simon in Bethany and was criticised by people, but Jesus said she did a good thing (Mark 14:3-9) is the same Jesus who sees goodness even in the lives of the sexual minorities. This perspective on the other hand shifts the understanding of mission as only confined to evangelism, reconciliation, liberation, conversion etc. It however presents the many dimensions of missions which then includes the mission with the sexual minorities.

The many dimensions of mission further presents a space for definitions and redefinitions of mission in different contexts and times. It can then be said that in this context, mission as searching for the good in the lives of the outcasts is the better understanding of the move envisaged in this theological reflection. Also mission as come and see, propels believers to take an action and challenge social ills in their communities. Such mission presents the sexual minorities as those who also fully participate in the mission of God. It further, traces the presence of God in the life of every individual person. It is for that reason therefore, that the sexual minorities move from being seen as deviant, demonic or outsiders in the family of God. They on the other hand, become God’s children not based on their sexual orientations but on their goodness and faith in God.

It can then be said that goodness can be found in the sexual minorities on the bases of qualities that each person possess as an individual. It is therefore, God’s transformative encounters with the outcasts that serves as an example to be emulated

in the encounter between the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane. It is in the same encounter that the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane begin to see the sexual minorities as fellow members of the family of God.

Again, the typology of the Good Samaritan as the sexual minorities presents strength rather than weakness. The sexual minorities take an active role and provide solutions to their own challenges. They are also actively participating in the mission of God therefore, mission “with” rather mission “for” becomes a correct indicator of the whole process. The black Pentecostal Christians are no longer seen as those who go out to do mission for the community, however they now do it with the entire community including the sexual minorities. In adopting this understanding of mission, the cases and causes of heteronormativity in Polokwane were then scrutinized using theological lenses.

#### **4.5.4.3 The unconditional love of God**

The love of God of love confronts the manifestations of marginalisation in the society which appears in many different forms. It is through the mission that embraces diversity that such love is presented to every member of the society. When Phumzile Mabizela was confronted by religious leaders and pastors about opening her house for the LGBTI whilst being a Christian minister, she indicated that the love of God becomes visible when centres of worship become places of healing that also embrace diversities (Mabizela:2016). It is therefore, for that reason that *Agape*<sup>63</sup> [God’s unconditional love] can only be practical when black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane are able to embrace the sexual minorities, welcome them in their places of worship and also search and publicly display the goodness that they found in them.

The same parable underscored the two commandments that underpin Jesus’s entire public ministry: Love of God and love of neighbour that shapes the ethic of love which is paramount for every Christian (Hebron 2011:103). It follows then, that the black

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<sup>63</sup> The term is a Hebrew concept that refers to God’s unconditional love

Pentecostal Christians should be propelled by these two fundamental ethics of love when reaching out to the sexual minorities. The love of God can help the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane to overlook the differences that has been the root of contentions for ages perpetuated by the debates about homosexuality. On the other hand, the love of neighbour can also help them to embrace the sexual minorities as their neighbours. Furthermore, the same ethics of love also speaks to the sexual minorities themselves. Just like the Good Samaritan, they have to rise and have encounters with the entire community. They also have to help those who are wounded by life challenges and fellow community members. This move therefore rejects the tendencies of solitude, self-pity and shutting oneself in the cocoon.

Just like the Good Samaritan who did not wait to be first declared good by the society, but came closer to the man and helped him. The sexual minorities in Polokwane should emulate the same act. The Good Samaritan's attitude projected the willingness to move beyond marginalisation and taking one's destiny into one's own hands. Since the Good Samaritan was declared to be good on the merit of his actions, the same attitude should prevail amongst the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. That will be strengthened by the love of God that compels everyone to search for good in the lives of others.

Nathaniel's inquiry further provides a positive move for searching for good that is manifested by the love of God and love of neighbour in the lives of the individuals. Therefore, asking a similar question in the face of the marginalisation of the sexual minorities, the response would be that through the lenses of God's love, there are good things that can be discovered in the lives of the sexual minorities.

In line with the parable of the Good Samaritan, the incarnation story also presented an example of God's unconditional love. Christ did not only offer eternal salvation, however, he also agonized, sweated and bled with the victim of oppression. The love of God was displayed by Christ sacrifice in order to save lives. Again the love of neighbour was manifested when he came to dwell amongst sinners and the outcasts.

Christ then became a model of mission to be emulated by the black Pentecostal Christians when they engage in mission with the sexual minorities in Polokwane and elsewhere. Moreover, the example of Christ also serves as a guiding post in the search for goodness in others. Moved by the love of God, Christ did not wait for sinners to be sanctified first, on the contrary he came to the world to sanctify them.

In the same way the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane can relate with those who are marginalised in the society. The incarnation narrative further presented Jesus Christ who even though equal with God did not use that equality as a display of his superiority. On the contrary, Christ became as a human being in order to save the world. By associating himself with sinners, Christ challenged the marginalisation of the outcasts. The black Pentecostal Christians can also do the same as a way of challenging marginalisation of the sexual minorities. They can also associate with the struggles of the sexual minorities in Polokwane and therefore, presents the true mission of God for all creation.

#### **4.5.4.4 The challenge to change heteronormative attitudes**

The parable of the Good Samaritan also presented a challenge to change the attitude towards the outcasts including the sexual minorities. Accepting the sexual minorities on the merit of their humanity and individual actions as fellow human beings unsettles the foundations of marginalisation, discrimination and oppression. The stereotypes, naming and categories often associated with the sexual minorities' falls off when the love of God and of neighbour are in place. The black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane can also learn from Christ, and therefore, chose to see a person as a human being first before any human given categories. The goodness in every individual can therefore, be brought to light and be celebrated.

Going down to the man who was wounded displayed an attitude of compassion and empathy from the side of the Samaritan. Furthermore, his actions also projected how a true neighbour should be. Even in the face of animosity between the Jews and the

Samaritan as indicated by the Samaritan woman (John 4:9) who told Jesus when he asked for water that:

You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?  
For Jews do not associate with Samaritans (NIV)

The Good Samaritan did not allow the racial animosity to hold him back from showing good works. His attitude therefore, qualified him to be called good. He did this in an undisputable manner that even the expert of the law had to affirm that his deed warranted him to be called a true neighbour. Because of his changed attitude therefore, the Samaritan moved from a position of marginality to a place of being a model for the true mission of God. This became true when Jesus ordered the expert of the law to go and be neighbourly as the Good Samaritan did.

The black Pentecostal Christians just like the expert of the law in the parable who got a lesson from the Good Samaritan can also learn something from the goodness of the sexual minorities. There is nevertheless, also a lesson to be learnt by the sexual minorities in Polokwane. They are also challenge to change their attitude of failing to see the good that is found within themselves. With the transformed mind-set, the sexual minorities can also transform their community and congregations.

#### **4.5.4.5 The image of God and the liberation from discrimination**

The Good Samaritan however, presented a challenge to this notion by his action. For the reason that the man's journey started in Jerusalem it can justify the presumption that he was a Jew (Jorgenson 2008:59). However, the Good Samaritan did not allow the racial disputes to hinder him from helping the man. The love of God and love of neighbour compelled him to challenge discrimination by his actions.



The same love of God and love of neighbour can be a motivation in challenging discrimination of the sexual minorities in Polokwane. The *Imago Dei*<sup>64</sup> cannot be restricted to the heterosexuals. On the contrary, it is also reflected in every human being irrespective of their sexual orientations. Treating everyone as created in the image of God challenges the manifestations of discrimination in any context. The Good Samaritan decided to put aside all the reasons which could have justified his passing by without helping the man. He saw in the wounded man someone created in the image of God who also deserved the love of neighbour. He did not want to first establish the race, sexuality or the language of the man, for him helping a human being was better than justifiable discriminating against them.

The Good Samaritan again, reflected and portrayed the image of God by helping the wounded man. The divine seed of the love of God became apparent from his actions. The black Pentecostal Christians and the community in Polokwane can also use the example of the Good Samaritan and challenge discrimination in their context. The Good Samaritan considered the life of the wounded man more important than the social prescribed discriminating scripts. Same as Jesus Christ did, the Good Samaritan portrayed his attitude as (Peters 1984:165) puts it:

Christ came to minister and identify himself with the people. In order to find human beings he became human; to win the Jew he became a Jew, lived as a Jew and observed Jewish customs, except where principle was involved. He lived his life with them and gave himself unreservedly for them. He did not stand apart or hold himself unreservedly from them. He identified himself with the people as a whole and not with any particular class. He did not live a sheltered life or a life of ease and comfort but faced life with its toil and hardness

This therefore, presented a model for a new understanding of mission. Such mission seek to challenge discrimination against the sexual minorities in Polokwane by having an encounter with them. The black Pentecostal Christians can no longer live aloof from the challenges faced by the sexual minorities within their communities. They have to

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<sup>64</sup> This is a theological concept that simply means the image of God

act as both Jesus and the Good Samaritans acted. Moreover, they should do that by going closer to the outcasts in the society including the sexual minorities. In embracing such a view, mission can thus be equated to what Nel (2011:127) called the need for the re-birth within the missionary enterprise<sup>65</sup>. The rebirth happens when Missiologists act as agents who do not simply plunder communities in a quest for conquering new territories beyond borders. However, as those who start to find a new rhythm of life. The similar rhythm should guide the black Pentecostal Christians in their venture to reach out to the sexual minorities by challenging discrimination.

#### 4.5.4.6 Finding the voices of the silenced

As someone regarded as an outcast, the Good Samaritan was easily rendered invisible by the society. On the other hand, the Priest and the Levite as prominent Jews figures were regarded worth of the credit hence their voices were always heard. Jesus broke the shackle of silencing by portraying a Samaritan as a good person. The actions of this particular Samaritan could not be silenced by anyone. He demonstrated *diakonia* when he chose to serve and therefore saved the life of the wounded man. The same God also opt for life in a similar manner as espoused by Ceccon & Paludan (1988:44) when asserting that in a world where the forces of evil and death are growing stronger, the *diakonia*<sup>66</sup> of the Good Samaritan teaches us the necessity of opting for life as God does.

Although the concept of the *diakonia* of the Good Samaritan was used by these scholars in the context of the need to take the side of the poor, other socially oppressed categories cannot be merely excluded. The same God who took the preferential option for the poor is also siding with the other marginalised groups in the society. That therefore, includes the sexual minorities. The Good Samaritan therefore, did not allow the perceptions of the society to silence him, but he defied all the laws and pushed the

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<sup>65</sup> Although Nel used the concept of rebirth within a different context, the same can be applicable in challenging heteronormativity in every society

<sup>66</sup> This concept has been used here to show that the black Pentecostal Christians has been sent by God to minister into the world, to serve rather than to be served.

boundaries in order to help the man. The sexual minorities in Polokwane can also emulate the Good Samaritan by allowing their good works to reflect and shine brighter than their given sexual minorities labels. This can be equated to the Xitsonga saying that *Mintirho ya vula vula* [Actions speak better]. Seeing the man at a distance, he might have easily concluded that the man was dead (Henry 2005:1858). He could have therefore, used the fear of coming closer to dead body as excuse for not helping the man. He could therefore, having the religious justification acted similar to the priest and the Levite<sup>67</sup>.

The voice of the Good Samaritan was further heard when he made a promise to the inner keeper that he will come back and pay for everything that he could have overspent on the man. By saying that, he refused silencing. It was going to be known that it was a Samaritan who paid for the expenses at the inn. The same act challenges the sexual minorities in Polokwane to make their voices heard. They should also be aware that they have the ability to define who they are before the face of God. Again, in serving others, they should know they are also serving God at the same time.

#### **4.5.4.7 Fellowship and witnessing to the world**

The typology of the Good Samaritan also presents the importance of fellowship and witnessing to the world. These elements manifested when the Good Samaritan spent a night at the inn with the man who was wounded. By doing that he was sharing in the suffering of the man and also witnessing to the loving of God. Fellowship and witnessing challenge the stigmatisation and stereotyping of the sexual minorities in Polokwane. The lesson to be drawn by the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane is that similar the Good Samaritan, they too can be involved with the world as witnesses of God's kingdom. Black Pentecostal Christians again are called to practice a messianic lifestyle within the black Pentecostal Christians but also to exercise a revolutionary impact on the values of the world.

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<sup>67</sup> I concur with Carson et al. (1994:998) that the priest might have feared defilement through touching a dead body

The implication therefore is that they do not have to withdraw into monasteries or barricade themselves against the realities of the sexual minorities. They should also understand that they are in the world and they are there for the world. Therefore, they have to have fellowship with those who are stigmatised. As a result, they also have an active vocation and mission to challenge the oppressive structures. This they will do as witnesses to the Kingdom of God. In order to fulfil that, the black Pentecostal Christians have to create new relationships amongst themselves and also with the society at a large. In doing this, they will be bearing witness to the lordship of Christ as (Stenchke 2011:178) has argued.

Furthermore, these relationships can in the process address the challenge of stigma and stereotyping of the sexual minorities prevalent in Polokwane. The Christ who associated with the marginalized and also those who were regarded as sinners serves as model for creating such relationships. He demonstrated that by even going to dine in the house of Zacchaeus the chief tax collector <sup>68</sup> (Luke: 19) who was regarded as a sinner. By doing that, Christ paved a way for the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane to follow. He showed that he came to save the lost and those who are ostracised the society

The isiZulu TV series called *Uzalo*<sup>69</sup> loosely translated in English as (generations) broadcasted in SABC1 presented the way to challenge the stigma and the stereotyping of the sexual minorities in Christian black Pentecostal Christians. One

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<sup>68</sup> The story of Zacchaeus is narrated in the Biblical book of Luke: 19:1-10. This man is portrayed as a chief tax collector who wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. He then climbed a sycamore tree-fig tree. When Jesus reached the spot where he was, he looked up and told him to come down since he wanted to spend the day at his house. When the people saw that, they complained and murmured to themselves saying, if Jesus could only know that Zacchaeus was a sinner.

<sup>69</sup> Although *Uzalo* focuses on the area called KwaMashu Township in KZN, its content was relevant for the context of Polokwane. Again, although the series is broadcasted in isiZulu, it is nevertheless popular in Polokwane where the language is not dominating

episode of the series presented this element when a same-sex couple was excommunicated from the congregation. This happened as a result that the members of the black Pentecostal Christians held a strong anti-homosexuality views. They maintained that people in a same-sex relationship were not welcomed in their congregation.

However, after the pastor made some reflections about the love of God, he changed his mind and reinstated the couple. The pastor's reflections were prompted by the conversation he had with the couple. They asked him if being homosexual was the only sin that could be committed against God. The question made the pastor to realise that expelling the couple from the black Pentecostal Christians was simply based on the stereotypical assumptions held against homosexuality by the members of his congregation. As a result, he decided to overturn the decision therefore, reinstated the couple.

His action however, sparked an uproar in the congregation. Some members who were disgruntled accused the pastor of compromising the truth and the image of the black Pentecostal Christians in favour of homosexuality. In responding to their concerns, the pastor asked the members of his black Pentecostal Christians what was Christ saying about their actions? (SABC 1: 10 January 2017).

In challenging the notion of stigma and stereotyping of the sexual minorities here I echoed similar sentiments reflected in the question asked by the pastor in *Uzalo*. I therefore, asked, what was God saying about the actions of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane? It is therefore, my view that irrespective of the differing cultural, traditional, religious views and also the infinite interpretations of the Scriptures which are in most cases anti-homosexual. Christ remains the centre in the reading of every situation. It follows therefore, that only Christ has set the right pattern for a relevant mission praxis in every context. It is only Christ again, who gives the black Pentecostal Christians the mandate and instruction to go out to those in the peripheries including the sexual minorities and search for good in their lives.

By placing a Samaritan in a position of being good, that was Christ way of removing the stigma and stereotype. It would have been expected that the two religious leaders were the one to be labelled good. However, it was a Samaritan who was perceived by the society to be bad who took an action to save the man. He was therefore, renamed by Christ when he was declared good. By doing that, Christ presented a symbol of being neighbourly. The same symbol also challenged homophobia in the society.

#### **4.5.4.8 Homophobia in the light of God's love**

Missiology scholars have recently started clustering homophobia amongst other social ills that need to be challenged. Social ills such as racism, tribalism, xenophobia and any other form of segregation based on gender categories are therefore, challenged together with homophobia ( Mashau 2018:7). I therefore, equated this move to what Hill, Knitter & Madges call:

Authentic Christian life that moves beyond understanding, feeling, and even beyond experience, to a way of life. The early Christians referred to their movement as “the way”. For them, faith was much more than a private set of beliefs or devotions, it was commitment, a fundamental option to be actively involved in loving others and making this a better world for people. It also includes being publicly involved in working for peace and justice (Hill, Knitter & Madges 2004:52-23)

It is that same desire for authentic Christian life that challenges the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane to stand against homophobia. Christians in South Africa are often regarded as part of society's moral barometers. By merely openly challenging homophobia, black Pentecostal Christians can set a pattern for the rest of the community to follow. Furthermore, that will also be a way of presenting the good side of the sexual minorities. The Good Samaritan therefore, as used to be a symbol typifying the sexual minorities, their goodness can therefore, be traced from other aspects of their lives apart from their sexual orientations. This may include their

contributions to the wellbeing of the community members, the positive roles they play in their families and congregations.

By moving beyond racism and tribalism to assist the man who was wounded, the Good Samaritan also moved beyond homophobia by not first asking what was the sexual orientation of the wounded man. Everything else was not important to him, all he wanted was to save a life that was in danger. His action also points to a God who goes down to the marginalised and the wounded in the society. The black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane can follow the same example by joining the marginalised sexual minorities in the peripheries. The gospel can be presented not exclusively through preaching and presenting sermons. Conversely, solidarity against homophobia can be another way to show the love of God for all.

#### **4.5.4.9 Religion, culture and ignorance**

The words of Philip again challenges the black Pentecostal Christians to act and therefore, move from their current position. Mission as “come and see” echoes the similar sentiments with “go and do likewise”. These words are used here in a way of promoting the importance of being neighbourly above any religious or cultural practice. The concepts of religion and culture can either be used as an oppressive or liberating tools. When they are used as an oppressive tool the mission of God is hindered and people are judged based on discriminative categories. On the other hand, the goodness that lies within certain people is often clouded. The end results therefore, is that the love of God and love of neighbour ceases to be a priority in the society. Again, rather than people looking for the good in other people they resort in emphasising the bad.

This truth was also highlighted in the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Leaning upon religion she insisted that their ancestors worshiped God in the mountain that was in Samaria whilst the Jews worshiped in Jerusalem (John 4:20). In this case, religion was used as a dividing tool. On the other side, the emphasis she

made about Jesus being a Jew asking for water from a Samaritan as discussed early in this chapter, shows that culture was also used to promote the divisions.

Another factor contributing to the problem of misusing religion and culture therefore, resulting in the ignorance about heteronormativity in the society is the growing polarisation between 'us' and 'them' (Mashau 2018:1). Such divisions are perpetuated amongst others on the bases of gender, race, sex, language, and ethnicity, country of origin and also on sexual orientations and gender identities. Again both religion and culture are often used to perpetuate the polarisation. It therefore, became apparent from the research findings that the hegemonic position of heteronormativity was in a way pushed by religion and culture.

Again, by the continuous emphasis on the distinction between the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities, the latter is then regarded as the outcast, marginalised and therefore, those who are pushed to the peripheries in both the black Pentecostal black Pentecostal Christians and community of Polokwane. It follows therefore, in the context of this study that the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane takes the position of 'us' and consequently, the sexual minorities becomes 'them' and therefore, '*the other*, the marginalised, the discriminated etc. In doing all these, culture and religion are often used as the justification of ignorance about the negative impact of heteronormativity.

The God of unity is therefore pointing to the need of liberating religion and culture in Polokwane. The love of God and the love of neighbour should be a motivating factor in replacing the existing polarisation. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the same oppressive elements of culture and religion were overcome by the love of God and the love of neighbour. In showing their love of God, both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities can regard each other as the children of God. Also, in showing their love for neighbour, they will embrace each as fellow members of the same family of God.



#### 4.5.5 The 1998 Anglican Communion conference

Although the Resolution 1.10 of the Lambeth Conference (1998)<sup>70</sup> was initially directed to the debate about homosexuality in the Anglican Communion, its content is however, represents the views held by different Christian's traditions including the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. Its applicability is based on that issues of homosexuality in the black Pentecostal Christians can no longer be confined to a particular Christian tradition or denomination. The topic has become universal and it affects the entire mission of God in the society. The declaration has nevertheless, partially broken the barriers of discrimination of the sexual minorities. On the other hand, in turn it indirectly reaffirmed their discrimination as it is common practice amongst many black Pentecostal Christians. The declaration was presented in the following manner:

Commends to the church the subsection report on human sexuality; in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage; recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships.

We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ; while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex; cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions (Anglican Communion 2005:9 )

The conference recognized that there were amongst them persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. It then committed itself to listen to the

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<sup>70</sup> The conference was held in England from the 18th of July until the 09<sup>th</sup> of August 1998. the members of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) were invited to Lambeth Conference 1988 and Lambeth Conference 1998 to discuss black Pentecostal Christians policy and share ideas (Anglican Communion 2005 :22)

experiences of the homosexual persons and wished to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptized, believing and faithful persons regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ. (Maraschin 2016:175) Paradoxically, the same conference rejected homosexuality and requested that its members should minister pastorally and pensively to all irrespective of their sexual orientations. The declaration did not come explicitly in giving affirming directions on the subject. Since the conference embraced the homosexual person but rejected homosexuality, it did not aid the situation.

It was the same in the context Polokwane, some participants showed that God loved the homosexual person but did not love homosexuality. The danger with this kind of assertion is that at the end it perpetuates discrimination and oppression of the sexual minorities. Contrary to this notion however, the Biblical Book of John Chapter 3: 16 presents a different narrative. It points to a God who so loved the world to the point of offering Christ to die for the world. The world here is inclusive of every human being and it does not categorise which sexual actions are deemed right by God. This again, poses a challenge to the black Pentecostal Christians. To what degree are they willing to follow the steps of God as revealed in the life of Christ and further emphasised by the parable of the Good Samaritan?

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The theological reflections in this chapter focused on the research findings presented in the previous chapter 3. It then became apparent that there was a need to challenge the hegemonic position of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane from a theological and misisological point of view. That in the process led to the emphasis on the re-reading of the current mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians with the sexual minorities in Polokwane. The question that was asked by Nathanael when he heard about the birth of Jesus in Nazareth, “Nazareth? Is there anything good that can come from there” became a descriptive of the attitude of the black Pentecostal Christians towards the sexual minorities in Polokwane. In addition, Philip’s response to Nathanael when telling him to “come and see” presented a model for the re-reading of this particular mission praxis.

In order to carry out the task, Nathanael's question was termed Nathanael's inquiry. Both the inquiry and the response were then applied to the re-reading of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. This parable was used as a manner of theologically reflecting on the need for searching for good in the lives of the sexual minorities. In displaying their good works after the search, the God who was already at work in the lives of the sexual minorities will be revealed. It was therefore, also important to present the encounter between God and the marginalised as a way to be emulated when doing mission with the sexual minorities in Polokwane.

Furthermore, the cases and causes of heteronormativity in Polokwane can be transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit. Having pointed to the importance of transformation, the same theological reflections made in this chapter leads to the possible development of the new post-heteronormative mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians with the sexual minorities in Polokwane. That task however, will be the main focus of the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Mission as going out to see the good in the lives of the sexual minorities**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The Nathaniel's inquiry and the subsequent response given by Philip presented during the theological reflections in the previous chapter set the tone for developing the mission strategy at this stage. The black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane have for ages been in a way asking though indirectly so if anything good can be found in the lives of the sexual minorities. They are now therefore, called out of their comfort zones to the transformative encounters with the sexual minorities. It is against this backdrop and also in responding to the fourth sub-question presented in chapter 1 of this study that the current chapter simultaneously focuses on developing a strategy for mission and reflexivity. The element of discernment for action was used here to determine the right direction in which the new mission praxis for the black Pentecostal Christians with the sexual minorities in Polokwane should take.

On the other hand, the element of reflexivity points to the need for both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane to constantly examine their journey. The same journey towards transformation becomes a core of reflexivity in this regard. Perhaps, they travel together they can both look for new pointers towards new destinations. In the process therefore, they can develop some new practical strategies for mission. Consequently, the process of redefining the relevant mission praxis for the black Pentecostal Christians with the sexual minorities in Polokwane took shape in this chapter.

In order to carry out the task of redefining that particular mission praxis, this chapter begins by contrasting the current mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane with the envisaged new mission strategies. It then moves further and presents the implementation strategy that should guide the process of transformation. Again, it then presents the possibility of redefining the current mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. The same parable of the Good Samaritan

as a typology of the sexual minorities in Polokwane continue to play a critical role in charting a contour for the envisaged redefining processes. Once more, the chapter presents the redefinition of the new mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians with the sexual minorities in Polokwane. Lastly, it brings in the element of reflexivity and pointing the way forward.

## **5.2 Contrasting the old and the new mission praxis**

The research findings in chapter 3 of this study portrayed the current mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians as being propelled by the hegemonic position of heteronormativity in Polokwane. Consequently, it was even though unconsciously and indirectly promoting the discrimination of the sexual minorities. This was done when the black Pentecostal Christians gave preference to the heterosexual members of their congregations whilst neglecting the needs of the sexual minorities. Moreover, heterosexuals were also given the sole privilege of participating in the mission of God. That in the process therefore, rendered those who had other sexual orientations, preferences and gender identities deviant and also perceived as those who distort God's intended order (De Gruchy & Germond 1997:90, Buchbinder 2013:27). As a result of that view, the sexual minorities were pushed to the peripheries and thus, made to feel unwelcomed in the house of God.

On the other hand, that has also led to the acceptance that failure to meet heterosexual standards should be hedged with various threats and punishments to those who fail to comply (Lindner et al., 2010:4-48, Nyeck & Epprect 2013:42). Although the sexual minorities were sometimes not directly punished by the black Pentecostal Christians, they were in a way punished when they were denied equal participation in the mission of God. For that reason, heteronormativity, heterosexist and compulsory heterosexuality thrived within the black Pentecostal Christians' circles in Polokwane. Apart from the pressure brought by the new democratic dispensation in South Africa, generally, people are now challenging discrimination based on gender, race, religious affiliation and sexual orientation. It is also the case within the black Pentecostal Christian circle. There is now a challenge to the black Pentecostal Christians for them to equally embrace transformation that is happening in the entire society. They are

also called to come and see the good in the lives of the sexual minorities. The table below presents the differences between the current mission praxis and the envisaged new mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane.

<b>Contrasting the old and the new mission praxis of the church with the sexual minorities in Polokwane</b>	
<b>The old mission praxis</b>	<b>The new mission praxis</b>
It considers heterosexuality as the only acceptable sexual expression and gender identity when presenting the mission of God	It acknowledges the existence of other sexual expressions and gender identity apart from heterosexuality when presenting the mission of God
Mission is presented for the sexual minorities	Mission is presented with the sexual minorities
The black Pentecostal Christians are not welcoming to the sexual minorities and they are treated as outsiders.	The black Pentecostal Christians welcome the sexual minorities as members of the same family of God
God loves homosexuals but hates homosexuality	God created both homosexuals and homosexuality therefore God does not emphasise the difference
The contents of mission activities are exclusively heterosexual oriented.	. The contents of mission activities embrace sexual diversities
Nothing good can be found in the lives of the sexual minorities	The black Pentecostal Christians searches for the works in the lives of the sexual minorities
The black Pentecostal Christians wait for the sexual minorities to come to church	The black Pentecostal Christians goes out to meet the sexual minorities wherever they are

**Table 5: *Contrasting the current and the proposed mission praxis***

### **5.3 The implementation strategy**

In presenting this strategy I take cognisance the fact that the implementation of the new mission praxis will not be an easy task. Both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities will have to first deal with some pertinent issues which stress

divisions between them. It will therefore, be unrealistic to assume that the process will not be met with challenges. However, although the task needs to be treated with sensitivity, there is a need for urgent action. The transformation and rebirth of the mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane cannot delay any further. For that reason, putting aside the fear of trending on this sensitive subject, the black Pentecostal Christians should be moved by the same love for God and love for neighbour and start the process of transformation.

In order to carry out the process of developing strategies for mission and in the process realising the envisaged transformation, the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane can also borrow from the principles of project management. Since projects have a starting and ending point, the same can be applicable to the black Pentecostal Christian mission strategies. Similar to the project management elements of defining, planning, executing and closing of the project (Larson & Gray 2013:7) defining the new strategies can follow the same route. Moreover, formulating strategies for mission should also answer to the question of what needs to be done (:29). These aspects are in line with what Karechi (1999:78) calls being clear with the aims of your strategy.

I therefore concur with the above mentioned scholars that without a clear understanding of what needs to be done, strategies for mission will just be a futile exercise. Additionally, as the new mission praxis presents the possibilities of other alternative strategies, there is still therefore, a need to evaluate the past and current strategies. In doing that, the choices made will be based on realistic assumptions. I use here the Specific, Measurable, Assignable, and Realistic and Time (SMART) principle in order to develop a new mission strategy for the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane. The same principle is often presented in a form of an acronym and can be adopted here as a tool for the mission practitioners. Table 6 below depicts the SMART principle.

## 5.4 Applying the SMART principle

<b>S</b>	Specific – be specific in targeting the objective
<b>M</b>	Measurable –Establish a measurable indicators of progress
<b>A</b>	Assignable –Make the objective assignable to specific role players
<b>R</b>	Realistic – State what can be realistically accomplished
<b>T</b>	Time related – State when the objective can be achieved

**Table6: *The SMART Principle***

### 5.4.1 The mission strategy must be specific

The new mission strategy needs to be more specific by clearly stating what needs to be done. All the processes concerned have to be clearly articulated from the onset. This aspect responds to the element of asking what needs to be done in order to realise change (Karechi1999:78). It will thus be critical that the strategies be developed with a clear knowledge of the desired outcome. In other words, what does this particular mission strategy seek to achieve? It follows then that transformation of the current mission praxis becomes the main aim of the new strategy.

This particular task therefore, should be equally accomplished by both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane. The black Pentecostal Christians need to acknowledge that the sexual minorities were pushed outside by the prevailing heteronormativity within its confines. In that manner, asking for forgiveness and prompting for healing on the side of the sexual minorities will be necessary. Again, in specifying the mission praxis, the black Pentecostal Christians should come up with ways aimed at discovering the good in the lives of the sexual minorities. However, the sexual minorities should continue to lead the process of defining their needs and the solutions thereof. This element will ensure that the person centeredness of the identification process is attained.



#### **5.4.2 The strategies should be measurable**

The measurability of mission strategies should be understood as an element which responds to the question of how far do we want to go in the transformation process? Defining what needs to be done as pointed out in the element of being specific is important however, without indicators pointing to the extent of the desired progress, the whole process will be defeated. The strategies for the new mission praxis should be measureable in terms of the desired outcome. The quantity of what needs to be achieved should be the guiding elements of the task. This element cannot be left to fate to decide. Both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities need be clear about the goals they both want to achieve. They have to know on what elements need to be transformed first also at what specific time.

Again, this might also mean that the black Pentecostal Christians will have to adopt an attitude of treating its members equally irrespective of their sexual orientations. In doing that, the black Pentecostal Christians can start seeing its members on the basis of their faith in God. In order to develop the measuring indicators, there should be targets that are set by both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities. In that case, they can both develop statements that will define the desired change. Again, such statements should also have an implementation plan defining the accomplishments.

#### **5.3.3 Assigning responsibilities**

This stage entails both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities allocating specific roles to individual role players. On the other hand, each role player needs to take the responsibility of ensuring that their tasks are accomplished accordingly. The task of transforming the current mission praxis can include amongst others, the element of presenting awareness campaigns regarding homosexuality and heteronormativity. It can also include an element of arranging for meetings between the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane. The purpose for these meetings will be to serve as contact point between the two.

#### **5.3.4 The strategy should be realistic**

Being realistic in this regard can include amongst others the realisation that the desired transformation cannot happen overnight. There is still more work that need to be accomplished before the desired outcome can be achieved. It will be unrealistic for both parties to assume that the transformation will not be met with challenges. There will therefore, be a need to be prepared on how to deal with the possible obstacles that might hinder the transformation process. Another important issue to be considered as being realistic is how to deal with the different perceptions existing between the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities. These perceptions includes amongst others how they view sex and sexuality.

On the other hand, it cannot be taken for granted that the animosity that existed between the two parties cannot have an impact in the transformation process. The point of departure here will be to accept the differences and diversity existing without the desire to change each other. Grobler, Schench and Du Toit emphasised the importance of accepting and being realistic about the differences in every encounter by saying that:

If I accept that we live in different realities; if we can see these things differing realities as the most promising resources for learning all history of the world; we can live together in order to learn from one another without fear; if we do all this then a new age could be dawning (Grobler, Schench & Du Toit 2006: 53)

This understanding have provided a reasonable ground for accepting the differences we see from other people. Rather than seeing the differences from a negative eye, they should be taken as a potential to learn from them. Again, that will be a sign of embracing each other as members of the same family. There should be an agreement to compromise certain things from both sides in order to walk in harmony. Nevertheless, the thin line separating the desire to change someone and their voluntary willingness to compromise certain things should be guarded against.

### **5.3.5 Stipulating the time frame**

The question of when should each step be accomplished comes to the fore. The steps of implementing the strategy need to be guided by some specific time frames. If this element is left unattended to, there is a possibility that nothing will be achieved at all. The black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities should be able to precisely articulate the dates, months and years in which all elements of the new mission praxis should be accomplished. The element of setting time frames is critical in ensuring that the envisaged transformation takes place.

### **5.4 Redefining the mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane**

The process of redefining the current mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians with the sexual minorities in Polokwane is a core aspect of this chapter. This need stems from the desire to change the current heteronormative oriented mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane into a post-heteronormative mission praxis. It is therefore necessary for the black Pentecostal Christians within that context to first embrace a new understanding of mission. Amongst other things, brought by this new understanding is that Christians change from the role of being a sending church to a church that is being sent to participate in God's mission.

The call for the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane is clearly defined as going out to see the good in the lives of the sexual minorities. In making that move, they can be in a position of discerning the presence of God already at work in the lives of the sexual minorities. It is against this backdrop therefore, that the black Pentecostal Christians become representatives of compassion, justice, peace and the reign of God on earth (Saayman 2010:13). As they have an encounter with the sexual minorities, they begin to show the compassion of God and also take up their role of calling for justice in all the structures of the society.

#### 5.4.1 Discerning the meaning of mission

Another distinguishing factor between the current mission praxis and the new one is the emphases on discerning the meaning of mission. When clearly pointing out what the new mission praxis should entail can contribute to the course of social change. This will happen as all the role players will be in a position of knowing the right direction. Therefore, praxis here does not take its inspiration from the classical texts nor classical behaviour but from the present realities and future possibilities of the sexual minorities (Butkus and Kolmes 2011:43) I therefore, see the main aim of mission here as effecting change in the society. This can be done when the black Pentecostal Christians stand in solidarity with the sexual minorities and challenge the heteronormativity that is prevalent in Polokwane.

Again, the inspiration of the new mission praxis comes from the goodness found in the lives of the sexual minorities. Their realities therefore, becomes the point of departure in doing mission. Jesus Christ validated this move when he directed the expert of the law to go and do as the Good Samaritan did. It is therefore, the sexual minorities who should set a trend for mission. This can happen the same way the Good Samaritan did by seen as an example of a true neighbour. The future prospects of mission therefore, sees the black Pentecostal Christians united with the sexual minorities. That achievement will be regarded as a realisation of the long awaited *kairos*<sup>71</sup> for both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane.

Rather than emphasising the differences based on the sexual categorisations and gender identities, the new mission praxis sees people as equal human beings and equally children of God. In essence the understanding of mission praxis here is fundamentally neither about heteronormativity nor *homonormativity*<sup>72</sup>. However, it is about seeing all individuals as being created in the image of God. This happens only when people avoid stressing the differences based their sexualities. The gender

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<sup>71</sup> Kairos points to the propitious moment for decision of action

<sup>72</sup> Homonormativity is the tendency of regarding homosexuality as the only accepted, normal and right sexual orientation and preference.

binaries are therefore, pushed aside in favour of regarding people as mere human beings who have good works to be discovered. Therefore, based on this understanding, the sexual minorities are then regarded as being called together with the black Pentecostal Christians to participate in the mission of God. Such participation can be as according to bear witness to the reconciliatory love of God made manifest through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit (Niemandt 2011:67).

In addition, when doing mission with the sexual minorities, the new mission praxis avoids shifting the blame. On the contrary, it provides every individual a space to take responsibility for their actions. Contrary to promoting animosity, it seeks to promote encounter and friendship between the sexual minorities and the black Pentecostal Christians. The same encounter is understood here on the bases of equality rather than on superiority and inferiority setup. Accordingly, the envisaged encounter and friendship should be based on the missional understanding of God's mission which sees mission as only initiated by God. Thus, the church should demonstrate to the world the possibility of disagreeing without attacking each other (Olson 2003:97- 119). Moreover, learning from the parable of the Good Samaritan presented in the preceding chapter, the following principles were seen as building blocks in defining the new mission praxis.

#### **5.4.2 Mission with the sexual minorities**

The call to transform the hegemonic position of heteronormativity within the church and society cannot be directed exclusively to the black Pentecostal Christians. There is also a need for the active involvement of the sexual minorities and the entire community. Hence, the whole process of transformation should be a joint venture. Conversely, together they can chart a contour towards transforming the oppressive societal, cultural, traditional, religious, church structures, attitudes and perceptions which are based on the heteronormative stance.

Therefore, rather than articulating a mission praxis for the sexual minorities, the call moved from the premise of developing a mission praxis with the sexual minorities.

This understanding of mission “with” rather than mission “for” the sexual minorities was well articulated by Stuart when saying that:

Increasingly, theologians within the South African churches demand that further discussions of homosexuality be a discussion *with* homosexuals rather than about them (Stuart 1997:185)

It follows then that this study can be regarded amongst other things as joining in the same discussions. However, although the focus is not essentially on homosexuality, the topic of heteronormativity addressed by this study cannot be separated from the former.

The similar thought was well articulated by Sneed <sup>73</sup> when he said that in our doing of black theology we must also ask:

What has black theology to say about black gays? What has the black gays to say about their experience? Sneed (2013:8)

These questions are fundamentally challenging theology and Missiology in particular to consider the experiences of black sexual minorities as a point of departure. In doing that however, it should allow the sexual minorities to speak for themselves. As a result, theology will be done *with* rather than *for* the sexual minorities. Again, in order to adequately accomplish this task, there is a need to adopt the concept of mission as transformation<sup>74</sup> (Kritzinger (2011:49). By doing that, a way will be paved for the mission of God to be accessible for everyone in the community.

Conversely, everyone becomes free to participate in mission activities of their local congregations and faith communities respectively. They are as a result able to participate irrespective of their sexual orientations or gender identities. Yet again, God is then presented as the God of love who does not discriminate anyone. Every person

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<sup>73</sup> Whilst Sneed here asked these questions in reference to the black gay men and Black theology, I have however viewed the same questions also as relevant in this study however in reference to the black sexual minorities and the mission praxis of the church.

<sup>74</sup> This notion was seen by Kritzinger (2011:49) as in the sense of thinking and acting for change.

therefore, becomes equal before the eyes of God. That in a process makes them free to worship and serve in all the activities of their congregations. The black Pentecostal Christians therefore, cannot stop the sexual minorities from participating in God's mission within their circles. This is so because no one have ownership of mission, as they all embrace the notion of mission as belonging to God. The black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities are partakers.

God dictates the contents and context of mission therefore, God invites all to participate without discriminating anyone. Subsequently, God as the owner of mission embraces diversity and is also against heteronormativity. Those who participates in God's mission have no other alternative. They have to embrace every person as a sign of obedience to God who invited them. It follows therefore, that the church exists because of mission not the other way round as Bosch puts it,

To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love towards people, since God is the fountain of sending love (Bosch 1991:390)

As a fountain of sending love, God is sending the church to show the same love to every human being including the sexual minorities. The love of God is again equally the same to all people. It is my view that God does not show partiality and thus, the church should do the same. In doing that, the black Pentecostal Christians will be in a position of discovering the good in the lives of the sexual minorities. Here again, the black Pentecostal Christians in mission become that place of safety where all are free to worship God without the fear of being judged.

It then follows that the black Pentecostal Christians should strive to see the all the people in the society through the eyes of God. There should therefore, be emphasis on seeing the sexual minorities as God's people and also as God's fellow children. It is only when such a view is adopted that the heterosexual – homosexual binary can be demolished. In the interest of winning everyone to the kingdom of God and in in order to adequately respond to every human's needs, the black Pentecostal Christians can adopt a mission praxis that is non-heteronormative. Whilst recognising the

possible challenges and threats, I see the new mission praxis as a way of bringing God, the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities together.

#### **5.4.3 Doing mission with greater sensitivity**

The new mission praxis moves from the premise of encountering the sexual minorities with a greater sensitivity. It does this by taking the realities of the sexual minorities as a point of departure when doing mission. Yet again, it also avoids making distinctions based on the socially, culturally and religiously constructed categorisations of people. These categorisation promotes the discrimination of those deemed to be different. This happens as people often seek to associate with those sharing the same identities. Mission here therefore, is presented as welcoming to every member of the society irrespective of their sexual orientations and gender identities.

The sensitivity and avoidance of categorisation embedded on the black Pentecostal Christian mission praxis on the other hand goes together with the quest for justice. Bosch (1991: 400-408) challenged those engaged in mission to opt for a holistic approach when engaging in mission. The same approach takes amongst other things embracing “*the otherness of the other*”<sup>75</sup> seriously. It should however, be borne in mind that this does not mean “*the other*” and their “*otherness*” disappears and become invisible. On the contrary, it is as Askew & Allen puts it:

The mark of the church as one is derived from the oneness of God, from whom the church receives its mission. God’s unity is not the oneness of assimilation, but rather provides for and values the otherness of the other as God’s loving – kindness (Askew & Allen 2015:51).

The sexual minorities therefore do not discard their sexualities in order to fit into the black Pentecostal Christianity. On the contrary, they are welcomed as they are and embraced with their true self. As a result, the sexual minorities can find themselves to be in a position of freely serving God together with the black Pentecostal Christians. And so, they can be able to do this without the pressure to change their *otherness* in

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<sup>75</sup> The concept has been coined here in reference to the uniqueness of other people who are deemed to be different by the society.



order to conform to heterosexuality. The sensitivity further denotes that mission strategies should be shaped through a respecting encounter and engagement within the contexts and neighbourhoods in which Christians live

This can happen when Christians engage and discover God's mission in those particular contexts (Roxburgh & Boren 2009:84). The black Pentecostal Christians therefore, are not necessarily taking mission to the sexual minorities. On the contrary, they are pulled by the mission of God already operating in the lives and realities of the sexual minorities. I therefore, took this understanding of mission as a starting point in the definition of a post heteronormative mission praxis for the church with the sexual minorities in Polokwane.

#### **5.4.4 Mission as going out to search for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities**

The black Pentecostal Christians however, take up the roles of going out and searching for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities not from their own initiatives. However, as a response to the directions given by God that is traceable in the words of Philip "Come and see" (John 1:46 NIV). These words therefore, present the two elements which guided the process of redefining the mission strategies in the context of the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane.

The first element entails the process of going out. It pushes the black Pentecostal Christians to move out of the confines of their church buildings, religious and cultural practices. They therefore, take an action to meet the sexual minorities in their struggles against oppression and marginalisation. The second element is about the option of searching for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities. Consequently, when the good is discovered is not swept under the carpet. On the contrary, the due acknowledgement is given to individuals irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identities.

#### **5.4.4.1 The moment of going out**

The process referred to in this section is understood as a creative encounter between the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane. On the other hand, it also presents the encounter between the sexual minorities and the other wounded community members. These kind of encounters can be regarded as a change facilitation process. It therefore, moves from the premise of defining the encounters as moments of transformation from both side (Schenck, Nel and Louw 2010:76). The black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane are transformed when they start moving away from their comfort zones and therefore, begin to see the good works in the lives of the sexual minorities. On the other hand, the sexual minorities are also transformed when they begin to realise their God assigned works. The works which entail going to the communities and doing good works to all who are wounded. Furthermore, the wounded in the communities will also be transformed when they see the love of God presented in the good works of the sexual minorities and the black Pentecostal Christians

This stage covers the first two elements of the SMART principles. At this level the public presence of the black Pentecostal Christians that is reflected through forgiveness, accountability, and love is manifested. The element of forgiveness is displayed when the black Pentecostal Christians presents the side of God who forgives everyone irrespective of their sexual orientations. On the other hand, the black Pentecostal Christians also takes accountability for challenging the position of heteronormativity in Polokwane.

They can do this by publicly confronting every structure that oppresses the sexual minorities within the black Pentecostal circles. They can also show their accountability by showing solidarity with the plight of the sexual minorities. The element of love here, refers to the unconditional love of God that is manifested when the black Pentecostal Christians are seen in the public with the sexual minorities. The same kind of love is also displayed when the black Pentecostal Christians regard everyone in the society as having been created in the image of God.

The same public presence of the black Pentecostal Christians on the other hand, displays the quality of God's reign on earth. The reign of God is seen when the good is detected even in the lives of those who are in the margin of the society. It therefore, occurs that the transcendence of God does not equate to a God who stands aloof from human predicaments. God has always been closer to humanity as reflected by the coming of Christ to die for the sinners. Moreover, the church acts according to God's passion for justice, peace, and wholeness of creation. It does that when it seeks the expansion of its circle by heralding the coming reign of God and welcoming those who respond to the message irrespective of their gender identities, sexual orientations

In going to the community, the qualities of peace, joy, and hope so pervade the black Pentecostal Christian's life together that life and hope are presented as tangible option for every marginalised person whom the black Pentecostal Christians encounter (Le Roux, 2011:103-105) The first element of the SMART principle which call for being specific is noticeable in the call directed to the black Pentecostal Christians. They are being called here to come out of their confines. The same call can be equated to the calling and sending of the black Pentecostal Christians to go and discover the mission of God in the lives of the sexual minorities. That will therefore, mean that the black Pentecostal Christians will have to openly take the side of the sexual minorities. They will also have to associate with their realities by embracing and loving them.

In order to be practical in responding to the call, the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane can then request to form part of the Limpopo Province LGBTI sector. The implication will be to attend the sector meetings that are constantly held in Polokwane. Again, they should also be willing to be criticised and ostracised by those who do accept the sexual minorities. In these sector meetings, the black Pentecostal Christians can also be in the position of presenting the liberating side of God. When questions regarding their role in challenging the oppression of the sexual minorities are raised, they will be there to give responses. Again, they can also find a space to present their plans of challenging heteronormativity within their circles and community.

By doing that, the black Pentecostal Christians will be presenting and also discovering the mission of God in the lives of the sexual minorities in Polokwane.

In order to ensure that this aspect is actualised, the CWC can use its position as an ally of the Limpopo LGBTI to build relationships and friendships with the other sexual minorities in the area. However, in order to start the formal process, they can write a letter as a Christian organisation requesting to be an ally of the LGBTI sector. In the same letter, they can specify their motives for requesting to join the sector. They can also indicate their vision of transforming the heteronormative structures and also observing the good that the LGBTI do in Polokwane for the purpose of defining their mission strategy. Once that has been achieved, the CWC can encourage other black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane to do the same. In order to that, they can use as a platform the Polokwane Pentecostal denominational meetings<sup>76</sup>. During these meetings they can then present their engagement with the LGBTI sector and also encourage other black Pentecostal Christians to do the same.

The second element of the SAMRT principle of ensuring that the strategy is measurable is also applicable at this stage. The black Pentecostal Christians have to decide together with the sexual minorities at this stage about how far they want to reach in the their transformation process. The same Limpopo LGBTI sector meetings can be used to discuss the goals to be reached. It will be again during these meetings where they can also discuss and agree what needs to be accomplished first and how far do they want to reach with regarding to transforming the heteronormative black Pentecostal Christian circles. The black Pentecostal mission activities, church programs and conference can be targeted in this regard. However, since the body of the black Pentecostal Christianity in Polokwane is broad, the element of measurability will therefore be relevant in ensuring that the work that has to be accomplished is quantified.

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<sup>76</sup> This is a gathering that has been formed by black Pentecostal ministers who broke away from their traditional Pentecostal churches. They have now formed their new ministries however, still maintained that they are Pentecostal Christians.

#### **5.4.4.2 The stage for searching for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities**

Embracing the concept of mission as searching for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities points the trajectory at this stage. Based on the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus presented a model to be emulated. Therefore, the binaries of heterosexuality and homosexuality should be deliberately pushed aside. This act will be motivated by the interest of finding the good attributes in the lives of the sexual minorities. Accordingly, the other boundary existing between the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities will also have to be demolished in favour of seeing every human being as created in the image of God.

The process of searching for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities emphasise that without the commitment to the gospel, encounter becomes a mere chatter (Bosch 1991:483-489). I therefore, used the element of creative encounter in this chapter because of its applicability to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The good works of the sexual minorities done in the name of Christ become a testimony to the world, witnessing about the love of God. Again, I applied the same concept of the creative encounter here with the view that without the authentic presence of the neighbour, encounter becomes arrogant and worthless (:484).

There should therefore, be a balance between the commitment to present the gospel and the concern for the neighbour's wellbeing. During such encounters, all the role players admit that they do not have all the answers. They all depends upon the wisdom of God to give them direction. Again, they all have to be prepared to live within a framework of penultimate knowledge therefore, refraining from making generalised judgemental remarks about each other.

Such attitude will therefore, call for all parties to the preparedness to take risks and anticipate the surprises as the Spirit guides them into fuller understanding (:489). The taking of risks can also entail the crossing of boundaries and the willingness to travel

with certain people in the society who were formerly deemed to be different. Again, some of these people were formally regarded as enemies. As a result, the black Pentecostal Christians should travel with the sexual minorities and they together will have to demolish the walls that separated them for ages. On the other hand, the sexual minorities will also have to open their hearts and welcome the love of God demonstrated by the black Pentecostal Christians. Bosch however, further warned against being judgemental when engaging in encounter when he said that:

We believe that the faith we profess is both true and just, and should be boldly proclaimed. We do this, however, not as judges or lawyers, but as witnesses; not as soldiers, but as envoys of peace; not as high-pressure sales persons, but as ambassadors of the Servant Lord (Bosch 1991:489)

When engaging in a creative encounter therefore, there is no place for judging or undermining those considered to be different. The whole process becomes a deepening of understanding and transformation of each other's worlds based on respect of each other. Such respect is reflected through embracing the diversities and the *otherness* of *the other* person when encountering each other. There should also be a point to clarify some misconceptions that might be existing in between the parties. An agreement to continue with the encounter whilst respecting each other's opinions should guide the process. On the other hand, both parties should also reach consensus that they were not aiming at changing or converting one another, rather, they wanted each participant to be free and be open enough to express their views and feelings without the fear of being judged or condemned.

The black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane should go out to meet the sexual minorities, and in the process they can overcome the boundaries laid by the heteronormativity. Again, in their encounter with the sexual minorities they will therefore, begin to discover God already visible in the good works of the sexual minorities. Rather than standing aloof wondering at what they discovered, they join the sexual minorities through building friendships and partnerships. Then, they work together in changing the world, through presenting Christ to those who are wounded.

Also the wounded in the community might join the partnership after witnessing the grace of God shown to them by the two parties. These good works include amongst others, effecting the healing processes. This can happen when both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities come out in the open to acknowledge their wrong-doing and ask for forgiveness. As the result of that action, fertile grounds can be laid for integration (Togarasei & Chitando 2011:219).

On the other hand the same good works can be presented through empathy shown in the realisation of the negative consequences of heteronormativity in the society. Motivated by commitments made by other Christian's communities the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane can show empathy to all in the community. The following Uppsala statement can also be understood as also inclusive of the realities of the sexual minorities who are constantly victims of discrimination:

We heard the cry of those who long for peace; of the hungry and exploited who demand bread and justice; of the victims of discrimination who claim human justice; and of the increasing millions who seek for the meaning of life (Bosch 1991:435)

The black Pentecostal Christians can heed to the cry of the victims of discrimination by showing them empathy. Furthermore, the sexual minorities in Polokwane can emulate the Good Samaritan by going down to the other wounded members of the community. They can go down to those wounded by poverty racism, tribalism, unemployment and may other social ills. Learning from the Good Samaritan, the sexual minorities can therefore, bring healing to the other marginalised members of the community. They can accomplish this by sharing their stories and also by supporting those who are wounded.

The remaining three elements of the SMART principle are therefore applicable at this stage. The element of assigning responsibilities can be made possible when both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities share the roles meant to achieve transformation. The black Pentecostal Christian congregations in Polokwane

who have already adopted the concept of transforming the heteronormative mission praxis can be the first to assign roles to their members. They can then appoint some representatives who will attend the LGBTI sector meetings and thereafter report the progress and challenges. Again, at these sector meetings, the representatives can therefore, listen to the sexual minorities, identify their spiritual needs and also provide spiritual support through Christian counselling, prayers, positive Biblical motivation talks that shows that God is on the side of the sexual minorities.

On the other hand, in order to be realistic, both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane should agree to carry out the process as a short and long short term project. That will in a way presents a realistic expectations from both sides. In order to begin the process, they can start by focus on telling and recording stories of the realities of the sexual minorities in Polokwane. These stories should present both the good and bad experiences they encountered in their lives. They should also narrate the good works done by the sexual minorities in different structures of the society. An example here will be a story of a lesbian couple who have started an orphanage in one of the villages around Polokwane. Stories such as this change the negative narrative that is often associated with the sexual minorities. Other stories can therefore, form part of the positive narrative about the sexual minorities in Polokwane.

After recording such stories in a form of journal entries, the collected entries can be used in searching for the good in the lives and realities of the sexual minorities. Again, the same narratives need to be presented publicly during church seminars and conferences. That will be done in order to declare the sexual minorities as good members of the society. I am not oblivious regarding the fact that the sexual minorities are not the only one who are doing good in the society. However, because of marginalisation and heteronormativity in the Polokwane community, their works are often not mentioned. This happens because heteronormativity has caused their marginalised sexual orientation to cloud their good works. The other reason for publicising their good works will be to present an example to be followed on how to be



neighbourly. In this case, the sexual minorities resemble the Good Samaritan as presented in the parable.

This process of searching for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities can in the process lead to the realisation of jubilee<sup>77</sup> in both the black Pentecostal Christian circles and the sexual minorities. Jubilee as the year of the Lord in this regard will mean amongst other things the moment of *Shalom*<sup>78</sup> where by all people are free to serve God irrespective of their sexual orientations or gender identities. Therefore, the post-heteronormative mission praxis with the sexual minorities in Polokwane is embedded on the following statement:

It is a mission that calls the black Pentecostal Christians to go out in order to search for the good works in the lives of the sexual minorities. The same good works can in the process reveal the presence of God already at work in the lives of the sexual minorities. Again, the same good works can serve as a model on how the mission of God in the black Pentecostal Christian circles in Polokwane should entail.

Since Jesus commanded the expert of the law to go and do likewise, God is now calling the black Pentecostal Christians to do the same and emulate the good works of the sexual minorities. The process will however call for the constant moments of reflexivity and redefining as new elements come to the fore. The last element of setting a time frame is also critical in order to achieve the desired transformation in Polokwane. Failure to have time frames for each stage in the process can also leave the whole process open to delays and failure.

This element can therefore, be monitored and any possible delay be addressed accordingly. The time frames can also be divided according to days, months, and years depending on the task at hand. However, even though this element should be

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<sup>77</sup> Jubilee was celebrated in Judaism as the year of liberty, restitution and simple living

<sup>78</sup> Shalom can be interpreted as peace

treated with caution it is also important to use the flexible approach. Being flexible can help the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane to be better prepared to address delays and unexpected challenges. In the next section, I turn to the element of reflexivity.

## 5.5 The moment of Reflexivity

At this juncture, the stage of reflexivity is also critical. The utilisation of journals, retreats, planning sessions and the reports that were provided after the LGBTI sector meetings play a vital role in the moment of reflexivity. The quality of the agency of the black Pentecostal Christians in the lives of the sexual minorities can therefore be determined at this stage. This is true as Kritzinger (2008:786) argued that reflexivity is a tool which can assist others to constructively scrutinise our strategies. The recordings therefore, again play a critical role in allowing the outsiders<sup>79</sup> to objectively contribute in the improvement of the mission strategies.

The same outsiders can assist the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities in identifying the blind spots during the process of transformation. Therefore, in order to ensure reflexivity there should be a tool that serve as a guiding post. I have therefore, again borrowed the principle that is called the SWOT analysis in order to accomplish the reflexivity task. Same as the SMART principle, this tool is also presented in a form of an acronym as shown in the table below.

### 5.5.1 The SWOT analysis

<b>S</b>	Strength - Identifying the strength of the strategy
<b>W</b>	Weakness – Identifying the weakness of each strategy
<b>O</b>	Opportunities – identifying the opportunities presented by each strategy
<b>T</b>	Threats – Identifying the threats presented by each strategy.

**Table 7: The SWOT analysis**

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<sup>79</sup> The term outsider here refers to anyone who is outside the black Pentecostal Christians circles and the sexual minorities.

This analytic tool can be used by the black Pentecostal Christians in and the outsiders in Polokwane when determine the successes and failures of the new mission praxis.

Each element should be considered carefully by all role players in order to ensure a smooth transition from the current to the new mission praxis. Firstly, the strength of the mission strategy should be determined through its positive outcomes. Coming out and searching for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities is one of the strength and also positive elements of the new mission strategy. The emphasis on the good works can in the process reveal some positive contributions from the sexual minorities which could not have otherwise been noticed.

Again, the relevancy of the SWOT analysis is that it does not presents a false picture of a mission strategy. It however, acknowledges that every mission strategy will have its weak points. Failure to identify these weak points can render the strategy ineffective. The examples of some weak points in the new mission strategy includes amongst others the fact that some black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane might feel that the strategy imposes elements which are against the black Pentecostal Christian faith and practice. That in the process can make them to challenge and oppose its implementation.

On the other hand, the sexual minorities in Polokwane might also feel that the strategy does not represent their way of dealing with heteronormativity in the society. That also can lead to the rejection of the new mission praxis on their side. Yet again, the strategy might not be viable and applicable in some other contexts. This can be true since every context present different dynamics and uniqueness of their own.

However, it is also important to look at the opportunities that the new strategies can present. By challenging heteronormativity through searching for the good, the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane can change the narrative regarding the sexual minorities in the entire community. The same strategy can also presents an opportunity for the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane to engage meaningfully with the sexual minorities. On the other hand, the sexual minorities can therefore, feel

at home within a black Pentecostal congregation. There will be no need for them to abandon their congregations or look for gay churches. While searching for the good in the lives of the sexual minorities, their families, other church members and the entire community can be assisted with the challenges brought by heteronormativity in their lives.

Moreover, the element of identifying threats in the new mission praxis is also critical. There can be some threats that can be identifiable at the implementation stage. It should not be taken for granted that every church member will accept this transformation. There can be negative consequences if the process is not properly and carefully implemented. Some other treats can also be discovered and dealt with in order to avoid them before they occur. The recognition of treats and the willingness to avert them can render the mission strategy more effective.

Wink (1989: vii) pointed out that today churches are undergoing fratricide over the issue of homosexuality. This will mean therefore, that the issue is a matter of life and death there is a need to implement the new strategy with great care. It is therefore, reliance in the guidance of the Holy Spirit that will help both the black Pentecostal Christians and the sexual minorities to find elements of agreements rather than the opposite. Since mission belongs to God, it is also the same God who will ensure its success. Similar with the incorporation of the gentiles into Christianity, where the Christians were convinced by the Holy Spirit to accept the gentiles (Act 10:44-46). The Christians who went with the Apostle Peter to the house of gentile called Cornelius were amazed when they witnessed the gentiles speaking in new tongues. The black Pentecostal Christians should also expect to be amazed by the grace of God manifested in the good works of the sexual minorities.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The post-heteronormative mission praxis was finally defined in this chapter. It was distinguished as a mission that calls the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane to go out and see the good in the lives of the sexual minorities. In doing that I utilised

the dimensions of strategies for mission and reflexivity as presented in the matrix praxis. Furthermore, in order to guide the process of developing strategies for mission, I borrowed the SMART principle. In essence, the principle emphasised the need to be specific on what exactly needed to be done. Again, on making sure that the identified tasks were measurable. The next element focused on assigning roles and responsibilities. It was then the element of being realistic. Then finally, it was made clear that time frames to accomplish the task should be set.

The element of reflexivity was therefore brought forth in order to ensure the smooth implementation of the transformation processes. In order to achieve that, the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane and the sexual minorities should keep journals of their progress and challenges. The report can be presented during some retreats and planning sessions. All these processes were to be guided by the SWOT analytical tool. The same tool was to be used to determine the strength of the mission strategy, its weakness, opportunities and threats. There was therefore, a strong warning to guard against causing more harm than good when implementing the new mission praxis. Since there are differences of opinions regarding the subject of heteronormativity within the black Pentecostal circles, it is important to rely in the power of Holy Spirit to guide the whole process.

## **5.7 Recommendations**

The study developed a post-heteronormative mission praxis with the black Pentecostal and the sexual minorities in Polokwane. The relevance of the study amongst other things was that it was conducted during a critical historical period in South Africa. The democratic era has challenged the hegemonic position of heteronormative in all structures and sectors of the society. There were also deafening voices calling for transformation in both the church and society. I therefore asked in this study how the new mission praxis of the black Pentecostal Christians that could address heteronormativity in Polokwane should look like. After engaging the body of knowledge on the subject I then applied the adapted mission praxis a research design.

I therefore, presented my story of insertion into the realities of the sexual minorities in Polokwane. The story was told in conjunction with the other stories of the sexual minorities I encountered in my entire life from my early childhood. My autobiography was therefore, used in this regard. Based on my pre-existing knowledge from my early childhood and also from my experience while doing ministry in Polokwane, the person centred identification processes was presented. I then presented the findings of the study which came as a results of interviews, focus groups and participant observation made in Polokwane. The study found that the position of heteronormativity in Polokwane was a problem to the sexual minorities, their families, church members and the entire community.

I then presented the theological reflection in order to align my findings with Missiology. At this stage the parable of the Good Samaritan found in the Biblical book of Luke 10 was read in the light of the refocused lenses of reading and interpreting the Bible. It became clear that using these lenses could help the black Pentecostal Christians to re-read and interpret the Bible from the sexual minorities' point of reference. I then finally chose the sexual minorities to be a type of the Good Samaritan. The new mission praxis was therefore, finally defined as the call to the black Pentecostal Christians to go out and see the good in the lives of the sexual minorities in Polokwane. In order to implement the new strategy, the SMART principle became a viable means for accomplishing the task. In concluding the study I highlighted the importance of reflexivity when implementing this new mission strategies. Thus, the reflexivity stage used the SWOT analysis as a tool to accomplish its purpose.

This study has fundamentally explored the possibility of developing a post-heteronormative mission praxis with the black Pentecostal with the sexual minorities in Polokwane. In doing this task, I was also aware that the nature Christians and the sexual minorities in Polokwane. However, the scope of the study could not allow the possibility of looking at the subject from other Christian traditions and denominations. Consequently, that has left a gap and a need for further studies which might show the impact of the same subject in a different context.

There were also a number of issues related to heteronormativity and the mission of God which were also not covered by this study. There is therefore a need to further look at the same topic however, address other aspects which were not touched here. Moreover, the study only looked at the issue of heteronormativity in relation to the sexual minorities and the mission praxis. There are still more issues other challenges resembling the realities of the sexual minorities in Polokwane. Such issues can still be investigated in order to find their impact in the mission of God. Further research in this field can contribute to more in-depth knowledge that can be used to develop other mission strategies. In the same way the praxis matrix can then continue as new challenges continue to face the sexual minorities and the black Pentecostal Christians in Polokwane and elsewhere.

## Appendix 01

<b>Appendix 01</b>				
<b>Individual interviews schedule :</b>				
DEVELOPING A POST-HETERONORMATIVE MISSION PRAXIS WITH THE CHURCH AND SEXUAL MINORITIES IN POLOKWANE: DTH UNISA				
A. Research Code				
B. Gender: Male_____ Female_____ Transgender_____ Non Gender Confirming_____				
C. Sexual Orientation Straight____ Lesbian____ Gay _____ Bisexual____ Intersex_____ Can't Disclose_____				
D. Sexual Preference MSM _____ WSM _____ Can't Disclose_____				
E. Age group 15 -20    21-25    26-30    31-35    36-40 41-45    46-50    51-55    56+				
F. Relationship: Partnership____ Cohabiting ____ Single____ Married_____				
G. Religion :				
H. Church affiliation:				
I. Residential Area:				

### 1. The sexual minorities

- 1.1 How do you understand heteronormativity?
- 1.2 What are your experiences of heteronormativity within a black Pentecostal church /person?
- 1.3 What are your experiences of heteronormativity from the people in Polokwane?
- 1.4 What do you think are the causes of heteronormativity in Polokwane/ Church?
- 1.5 Do you know of any church in Polokwane that is gay friendly?
- 1.6 What are common realities facing the sexual minorities in Polokwane?
- 1.7 How do you understand your faith in a God / Spirituality?
- 1.8 How do the church view your faith in God?



1.9 What do you think can be done to change heteronormativity in Polokwane?

## **2. The CWC and Church**

2.1 How do you understand heteronormativity?

2.2 What is your congregation's involvement on challenging heteronormativity in Polokwane?

2.3 What are your experiences of heteronormativity in Polokwane?

2.4 What do you think are the causes of heteronormativity in Polokwane/ Church?

2.5 Do you know your church fully accommodating to the sexual minorities? If No why do you think they don't? If yes how do they do that?

2.6 Are you accommodating/ accepting the sexual minorities in Polokwane? If No why are you not accommodating them? If yes how do you do it?

2.7 How do you think God views the sexual minorities?

2.8 Are you accommodating/ accepting the sexual minorities in Polokwane? If No why are you not accommodating them? If yes how do you do it?

2.9 What can be done to change heteronormativity in Polokwane?

## **3. Church leaders and Pastors**

3.1 How do you understand heteronormativity in your church?

3.2 What is your view about God and sexual minorities?

3.3 What is your view about God and heteronormativity?

3.4 What are the practical steps that you have in your congregation to address heteronormativity?

3.5 Is your congregation gay friendly? If yes how..... If no why?

3.6 Is your congregation having programs for the sexual minorities? No why? If yes how?

## **4 Ordinary People in Polokwane?**

4.1 How do you understand heteronormativity?

4.2 What are your experiences of heteronormativity within a black Pentecostal church /person?

4.3 What do you think are the causes of heteronormativity in Polokwane/ Church?

4.4 What is your view about God and sexual minorities?

4.5 Are you accommodating/ accepting the sexual minorities in Polokwane? If No why are you not accommodating them? If yes how do you do it?

4.6 What should the Church do with regard to sexual minorities / heteronormativity? If something then what? If nothing then why?

<b>Appendix 02</b> <b>Focus Group interviews schedule :</b>				
Group name :				
DEVELOPING A POST-HETERONORMATIVE MISSION PRAXIS WITH THE CHURCH AND SEXUAL MINORITIES IN POLOKWANE: DTH UNISA				
Place_____Date_____Time_____				
J. Gender: Male_____ Female_____ Transgender_____ Non Gender Confirming_____				
K. Sexual Orientation Straight_____ Lesbian_____ Gay _____ Bisexual_____ Intersex_____ Can't Disclose_____				
L. Sexual Preference MSM _____ WSM _____ Can't Disclose_____				
M. Age group 15 -20    21-25    26-30    31-35    36-40 41-45    46-50    51-55    56+				
N. Relationship: Partnership_____ Cohabiting _____ Single_____ Married_____				
O. Religion :				
P. Church affiliation:				
Q. Residential Area:				

### 3. The sexual minorities

3.1 How do you understand heteronormativity?

3.2 What are your experiences of heteronormativity within a black Pentecostal church /person?

3.3 What are your experiences of heteronormativity from the people in Polokwane?

3.4 What do you think are the causes of heteronormativity in Polokwane/ Church?

3.5 Do you know of any church in Polokwane that is gay friendly?

3.6 What are common realities facing the sexual minorities in Polokwane?

- 3.7 How do you understand your faith in a God / Spirituality?
- 3.8 How do the church view your faith in God?
- 3.9 What do you think can be done to change heteronormativity in Polokwane?

#### **4. The CWC and Church**

- 4.1 How do you understand heteronormativity?
- 4.2 What is your congregation's involvement on challenging heteronormativity in Polokwane?
- 4.3 What are your experiences of heteronormativity in Polokwane?
- 4.4 What do you think are the causes of heteronormativity in Polokwane/ Church?
- 4.5 Do you know your church fully accommodating to the sexual minorities? If No why do you think they don't? If yes how do they do that?
- 4.6 Are you accommodating/ accepting the sexual minorities in Polokwane? If No why are you not accommodating them? If yes how do you it?
- 4.7 How do you think God views the sexual minorities?
- 4.8 Are you accommodating/ accepting the sexual minorities in Polokwane? If No why are you not accommodating them? If yes how do you it?
- 4.9 What can be done to change heteronormativity in Polokwane?

#### **3. Church leaders and Pastors**

- 3.1 How do you understand heteronormativity in your church?
- 3.2 What is your view about God and sexual minorities?
- 3.3 What is your view about God and heteronormativity?
- 3.4 What are the practical steps that you have in your congregation to address heteronormativity?
- 4.5 Is your congregation gay friendly? If yes how..... If no why?
- 4.6 Is your congregation having programs for the sexual minorities? No why? If yes how?

#### **5 Ordinary People in Polokwane?**

- 4.1 How do you understand heteronormativity?
- 4.2 What are your experiences of heteronormativity within a black Pentecostal church /person?
- 4.3 What do you think are the causes of heteronormativity in Polokwane/ Church?
- 4.4 What is your view about God and sexual minorities?
- 4.5 Are you accommodating/ accepting the sexual minorities in Polokwane? If No why are you not accommodating them? If yes how do you it?

### **Appendix 03:**

#### **The letter of requesting entry into the research field**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/ Madam

As supervisor of the doctoral research project of Themba Shingange, I hereby affirm that he is a bona fide postgraduate student of the University of South Africa, who is doing a research project entitled: DEVELOPING A POST-HETERONORMATIVE MISSION PRAXIS WITH THE CHURCH AND THE SEXUAL MINORIITES IN THE CITY OF POLOKWANE : SOUTH AFRICA

In this research the student aims at discovering the possibility of developing a post-heteronormative mission praxis which will be relevant for both the sexual minorities and the church in the city of Polokwane. I therefore, commend him to you, with the request that you assist him in pursuing this important research project.

His contact details are: PO Box 1184 Sovenga 1184 and he can be contacted at 0721505653 or shingange9@gmail.com

If you have any questions about this research project, you are welcome to contact me at the departmental address above or by telephone at (012) 429-4078 or

Yours sincerely

PROF R.W NEL

Discipline leader (Missiology)

DTH Supervisor

## Appendix 04

### An Informed consent form

I, the undersigned, hereby give consent that Themba Shingange, a Doctor of Theology student at the University of South Africa, may use the information that I supplied to him in an interview for his doctoral thesis. I declare the following:

Statement	Agree	Do not agree
1. I have been informed by I of the objectives of the intended research		
2. I supplied to me his name, address and contact details as well as the details of his research supervisor		
3. I was informed why I was selected as an informant for the research project		
4. I give this consent willingly, under no coercion and without inducement		
5. I received satisfactory answers to any question that I had about the research		
6. I was informed on the estimated time that the interview would take		
7. I retain the right to refrain from answering any question posed by the researcher		
8. I agree that the interview may be recorded by means of an electronic device		
9. I agree that the researcher may quote my views in his thesis and in any subsequent publications that may flow from it		

10. I require that he should present to me ( for my approval) the record that he made of the interview (S), before including it in his thesis		
11. I agree that he may refer to me by name when quoting my views in his thesis and possible subsequent publications		
12. I accept that he will store the record of my interview(s) safely and he will destroy it no later than two years after his thesis has been accepted		
13. I understand this information and its implications		
14. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time in writing, without needing to give reasons		

Full names.....

Place.....

Date.....

Signature.....

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